



Our Coast, Our Waterways

Lake Macquarie (mini report)

Survey results

SEPTEMBER 2021

Central Coast Council

Our Coast, Our Waterways: Open Coast and Coastal Lagoons mini report

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Date: 15 September 2021

Version 1

Introduction

Central Coast Council, in accordance with the NSW Government Coastal Management Framework are responsible for developing Coastal Management Programs (CMPs) for its waterways.

The Lake Macquarie Coastal Management Program includes the lake, Swansea channel and the beaches and is being developed by Lake Macquarie City Council and whilst Central Coast Council are not directly responsible for the development of this CMP, we have been involved and will continue to be involved.

Here on the Central Coast it is difficult to go more than 2km without coming into very close proximity of a waterway. This means that the majority of the Central Coast's population play a role in the ongoing maintenance and health of waterways which is why we decided to take a regionwide approach to phase one consultation.

Between 30 March and 15 June 2021 Central Coast Council hosted the first phase of community consultation to inform the development of the Coastal Management Programs.

Key touchpoints in the first phase of engagement included:

- Key interest focus groups
- A dedicated project webpage
- An online waterways survey
- Community pop-up information stalls

This report provides an overview of the engagement approach and provides a summary of the **survey results from users of Lake Macquarie**.

A region-wide report is also available at: yourvoiceourcoast.com/waterways.

Communications reach

Communications activity during the phase one consultation achieved:

- **3,918** visits to the Your Voice Our Coast project page
- **1,168** survey responses received
- **14** ads across Facebook and Instagram, reaching **62,011** unique users and achieving **263,341** impressions and **2,074** link clicks
- Snap chat ads, generating **128,212** paid impressions
- 8 Google display ads, generating **815,340** impressions and **819** clicks
- 2 e-news articles distributed, reaching more than **12,000** subscribers – generating **97** click throughs
- Over **350** respondents have entered the focus group candidate pool
- Over **220** stakeholder emails sent
- **3** focus groups hosted with over **20** participants
- Over **400** community members reached at pop up events
- Over **500** postcards distributed

Key findings from survey

The phase one – Our Coast, Our Waterways – survey delivered some really important and encouraging results from users of Lake Macquarie:

- **88.7%** of respondents that use Lake Macquarie strongly agree that Waterways are a significant reason they live on the Central Coast
- **96.2%** of respondents that use Lake Macquarie strongly agree that Waterways contribute to their personal health and wellbeing (e.g. fitness, relaxation, happiness, lifestyle, sense of place, cultural heritage)
- **63.9%** of respondents that use Lake Macquarie strongly agree that if waterway access, safety or condition declined significantly they would reduce the frequency they visit and use waterways.
- **44.4%** of respondents that use Lake Macquarie strongly agree that if waterway access, safety or condition declined significantly they would consider moving away from the Central Coast to another location
- **82.7%** of respondents that use Lake Macquarie strongly agree that more should be done to protect and enhance the natural aspects of waterways such as the cleanliness of water, health of coastal vegetation, and the protection of wildlife
- **38.1%** of respondents that use Lake Macquarie strongly agree that they would support more resources being used for the management of our waterways and coast, even if it meant a very small increase in their property rates or rent a further **36.4%** somewhat agree and **11%** neither agreed or disagreed
- When asked what participants value about the waterways, the top three topics covered in comments from users of Lake Macquarie related to:
 - Recreational opportunities **31.1%**
 - Beauty and aesthetics **15.3%**
 - Cleanliness of waterways **11.2%**
- When asked what the top three focus areas for Coastal Management Programs should be, respondents who use Lake Macquarie advised:
 - Reducing pollutant loads (sediment, nutrients and microbes) entering waterways **17.1%**
 - Improving and maintain water quality **12.5%**
 - Educating the community on their role in maintaining and improving the health of waterways **12%**
- **54** comments were received when additional comments from users of Lake Macquarie were requested, the top three topics covered in these comments were:
 - Recreation **6.5%**
 - Wamberal Seawall **6.5%**
 - Quality of life **4.3%**

Sample participant commentary

The survey offered multiple opportunities for the community to share their thoughts. Below is an example of the comments received from users of Lake Macquarie when asked what they value about waterways (comments are presented verbatim):

- The beauty of Lake Macquarie, the many changing moods of the lake. Being able to go boating, canoeing and kayaking regularly.
- The water health for both humans and animals.
- Wildlife, walking paths, shade trees, open foreshores then forests, picnic facilities and seats.
- Nature. Nice Separation of houses and suburbs instead of mile after mile of housing estates.

Below is an example of the responses received when participants were asked to contribute any other comments about Lake Macquarie:

- The Central Coast IS the waterways. Our tourism relies very heavily on our water bodies and the activities available.
If the water is maintained to a high quality, bird and fish life will thrive, the ecosystem will thrive, and tourism will follow suit.
- Our under utilised asset especially North end of CC. Yes I have a vested interest but I believe there is a lot can be done with low investment at the North end to contribute to tourism which then can be re-invested in the protection and preservation of our waterways and associated infrastructure.
- Our waterways are a crucial component of the entire Central Coast. Our communities future relies good management and proactive programs to maintain and improve them.

Next steps

Council will use the results and feedback provided to assist Lake Macquarie City Council to identify community priorities for the southern end of the lake to inform the development of the Coastal Management Program.

The information detailed in this report has been shared with Lake Macquarie City Council and will be utilised by both Councils as we work towards the finalised Lake Macquarie Coastal Management Program.

Lake Macquarie user survey results

The Our Coast, Our Waterways survey was undertaken to understand the value our community places on waterways, their uses of them, opinions on them and their opinions on future management. We also obtained a demographic profile of each of the participants to better understand who we are hearing from and to facilitate further analysis of the feedback collected.

We have prepared a regionwide report as well as *mini reports* for the four CMPs; this report – *Lake Macquarie mini report* – explores the results garnered for participants that indicated they use Lake Macquarie.

The survey was broken up into stages –

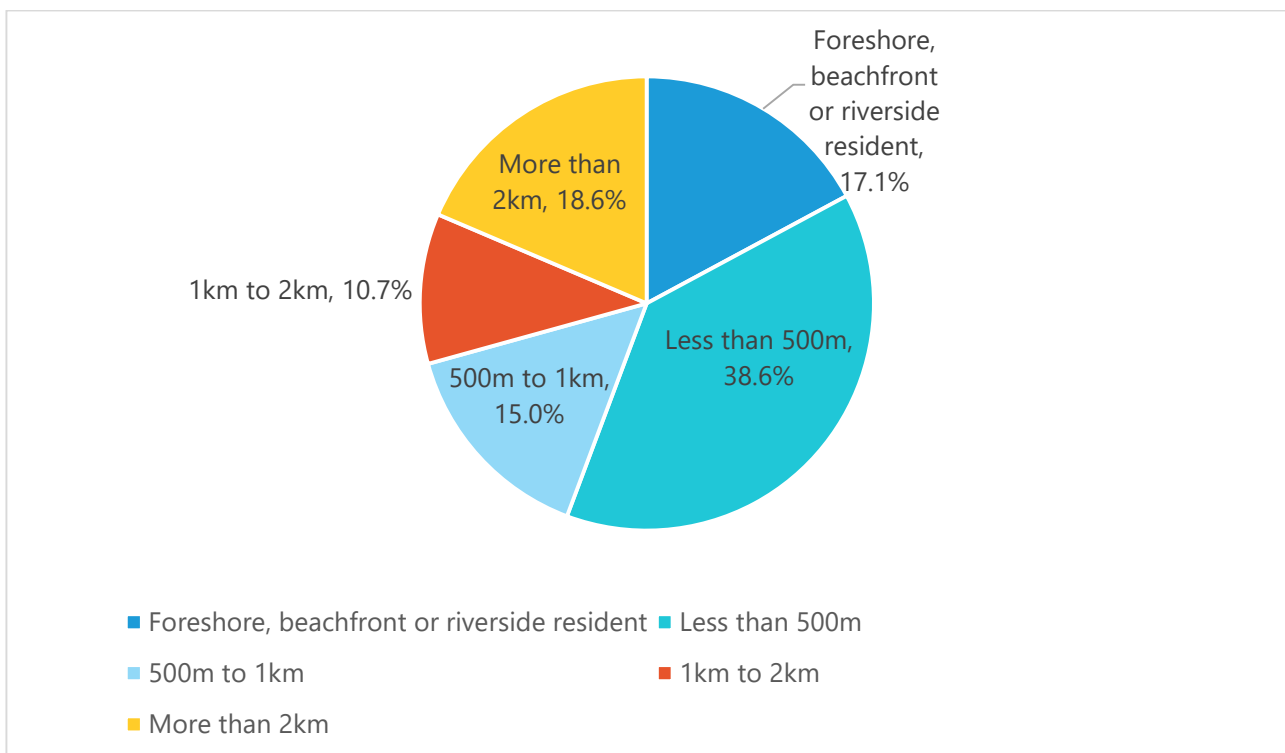
- Use of Central Coast Waterways
- Importance of Central Coast waterways to you
- Values and threats to Central Coast waterways
- About you and your household

We have provided the results garnered from Lake Macquarie users in this survey using these same headings.

Use of Central Coast waterways

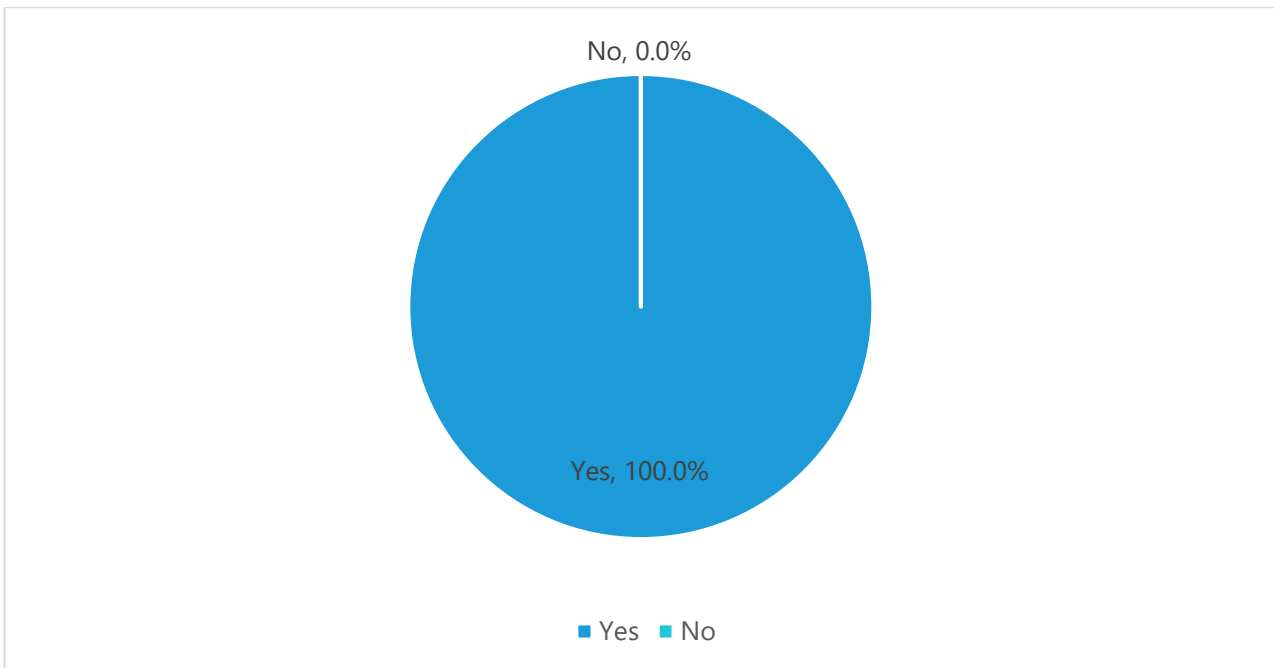
The following questions were designed to assist in understanding how the community uses Central Coast Waterways.

Figure 1: How close do you live to a Central Coast Waterway?



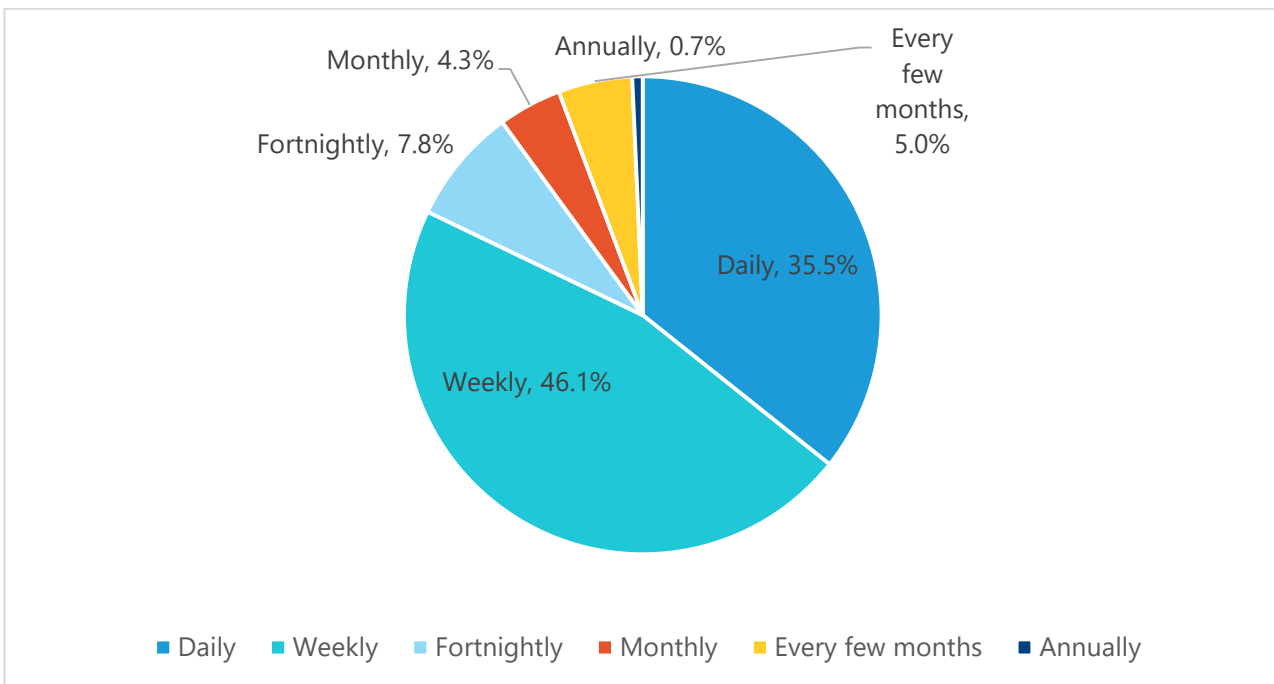
Total respondents = 140

Figure 2: Do you currently use any of our Central Coast Waterways, including recreating in or around them?



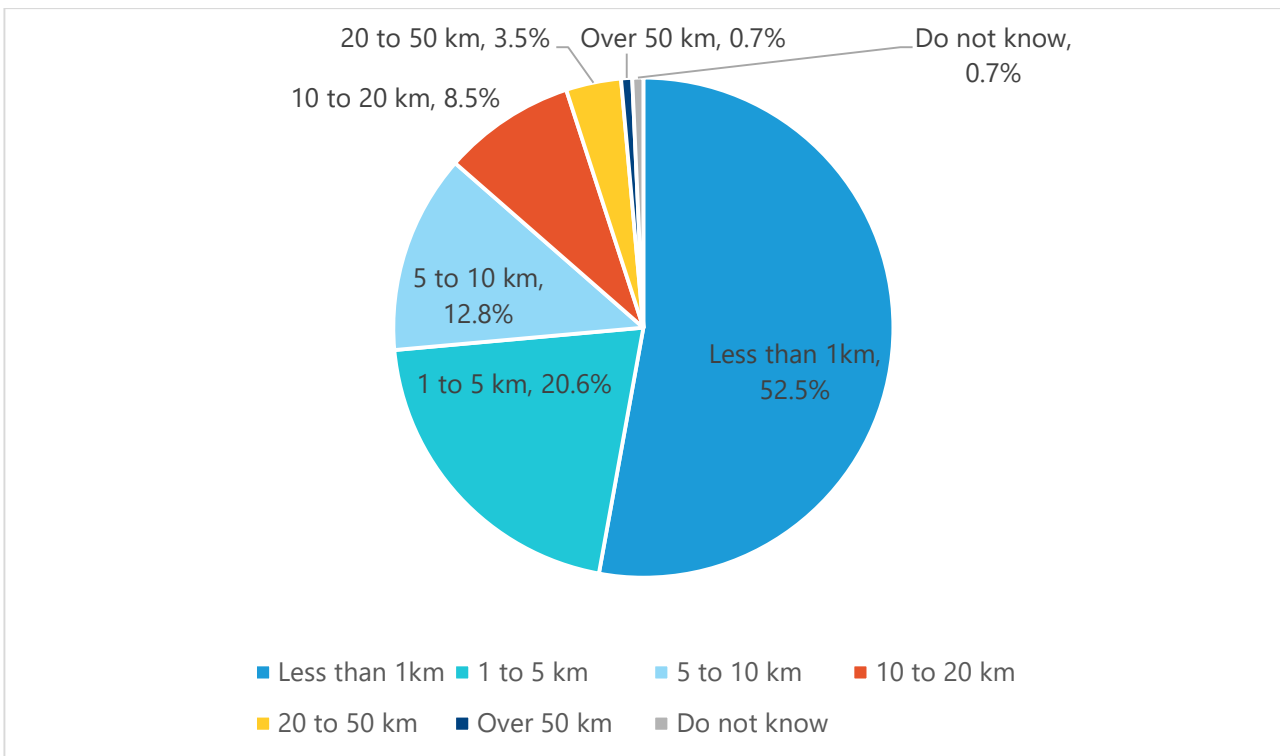
Total respondents=140

Figure 3: How often do you use them?



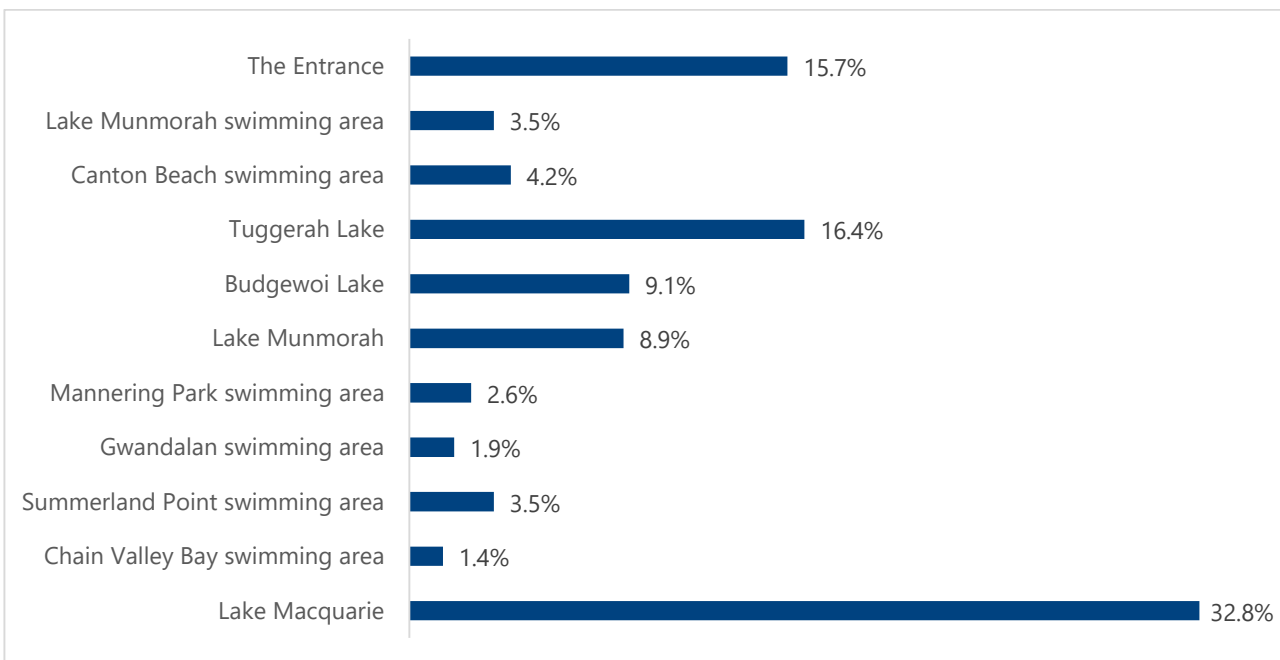
Total respondents=140

Figure 4: How far away from your home is the waterway that you visit most?



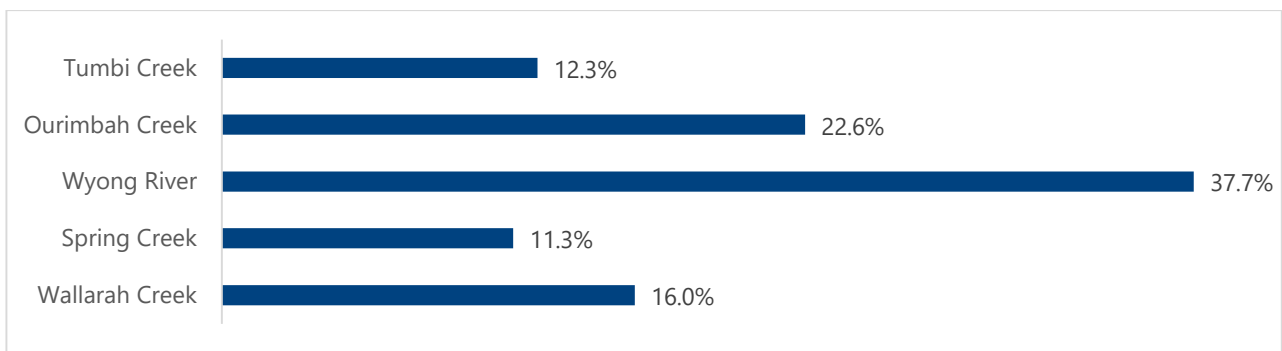
Total respondents=141

Figure 5: Which Central Coast Waterways do you use? (Lakes)



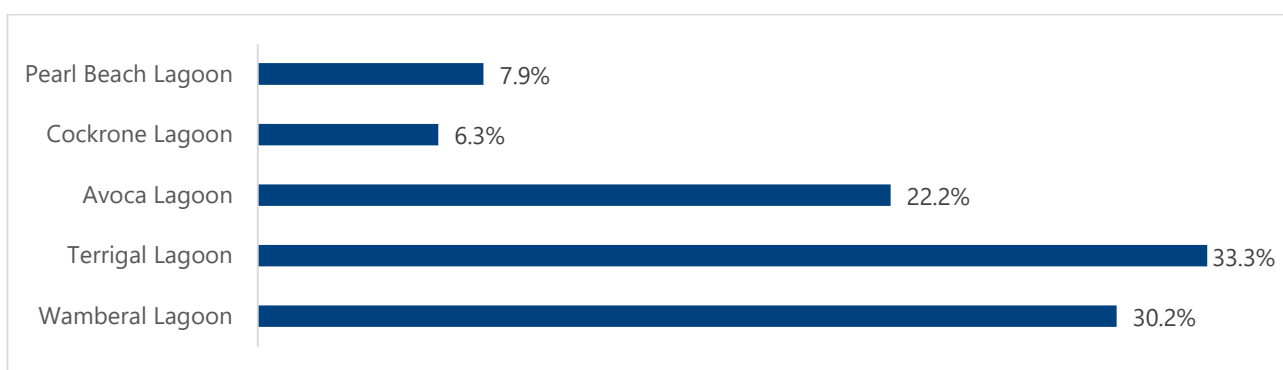
Total selections=427

Figure 6: Which Central Coast Waterways do you use? (Creeks)



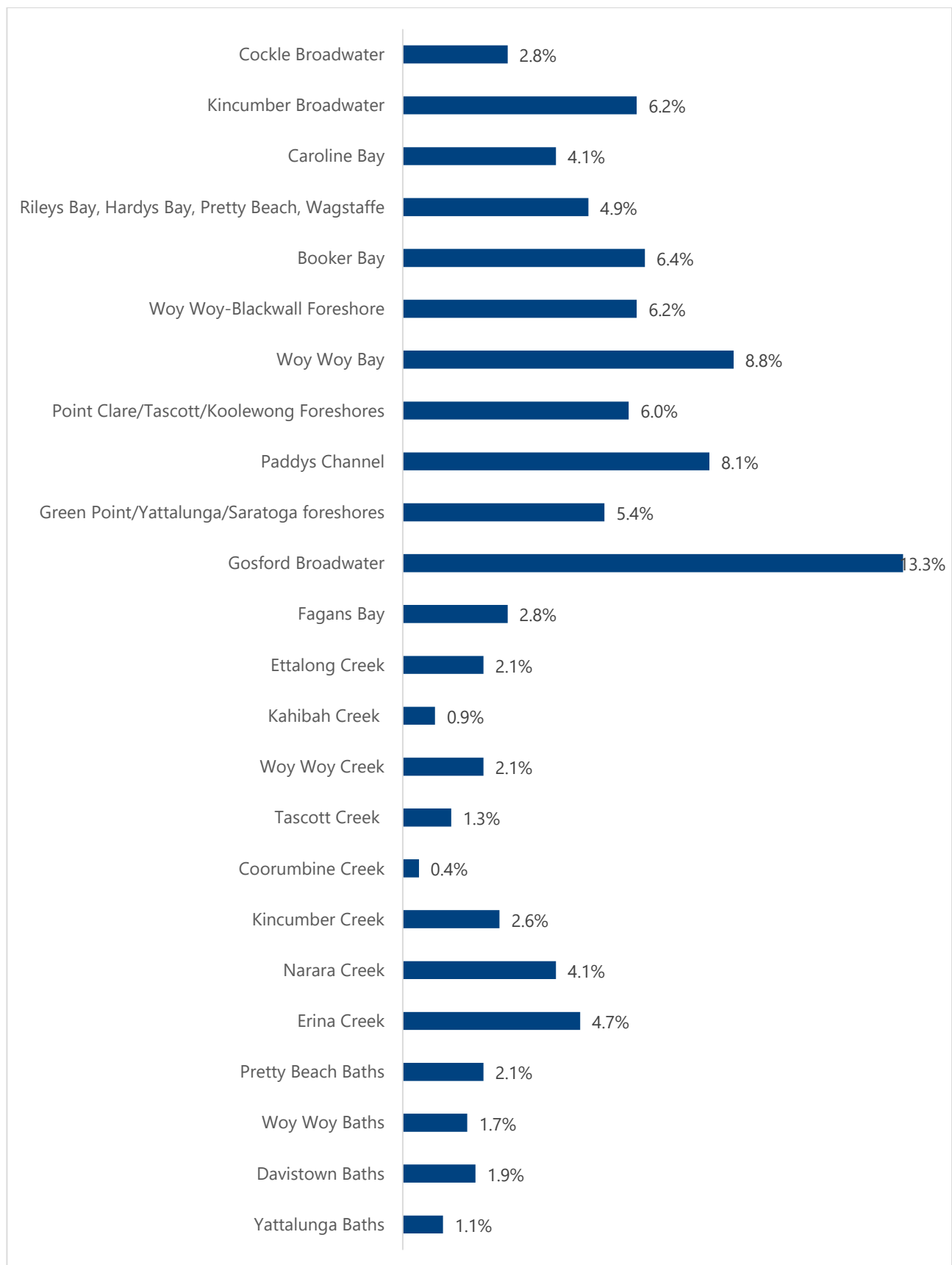
Total selections=106

Figure 7: Which Central Coast Waterways do you use? (Lagoons)



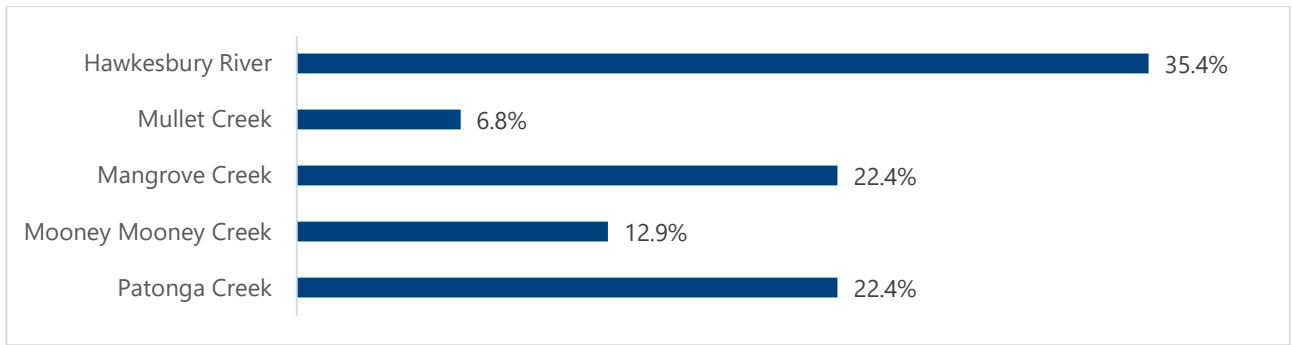
Total selections=126

Figure 8: Which Central Coast Waterways do you use? (Brisbane Water & Broken Bay)



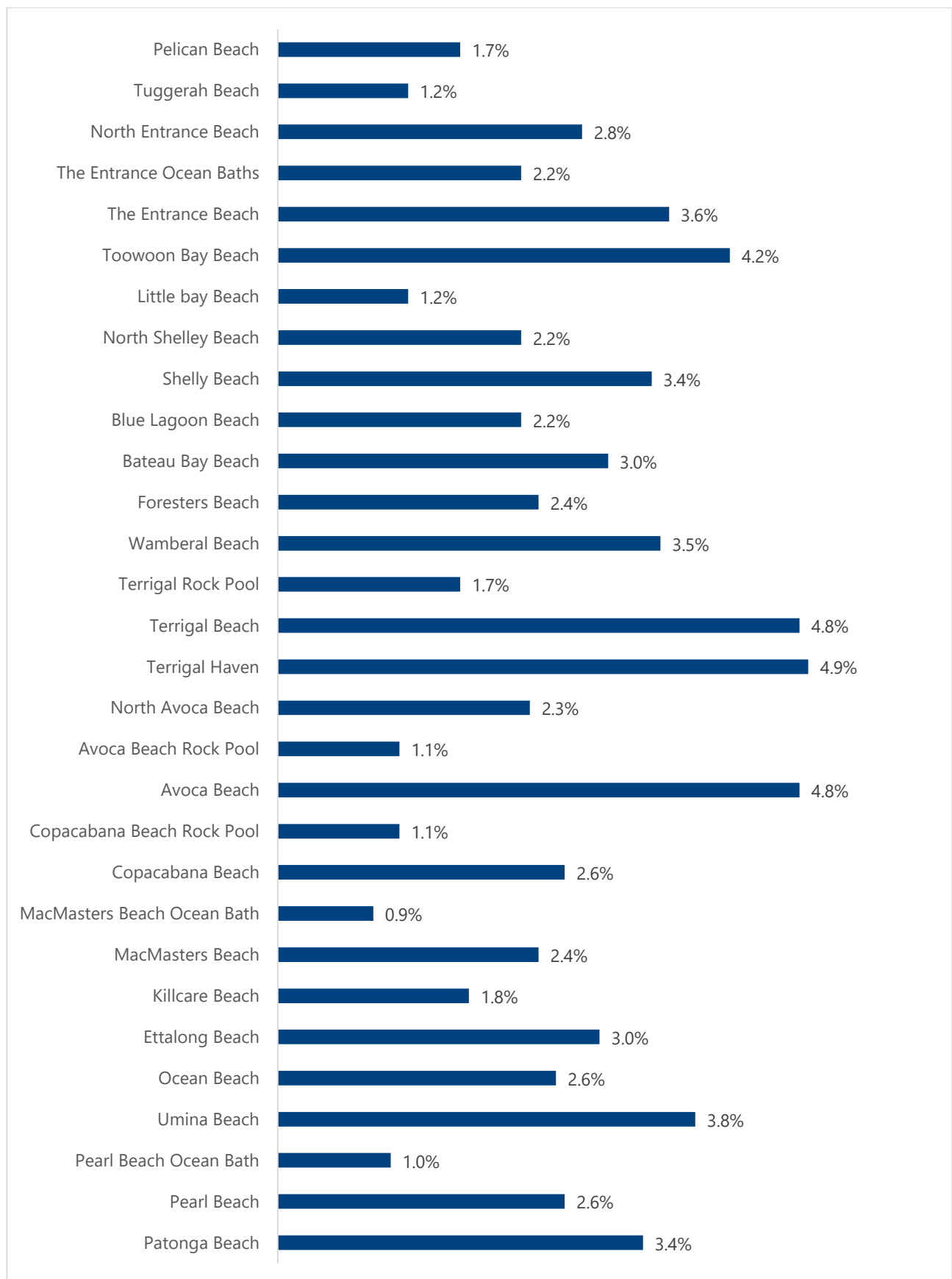
Total selections=467

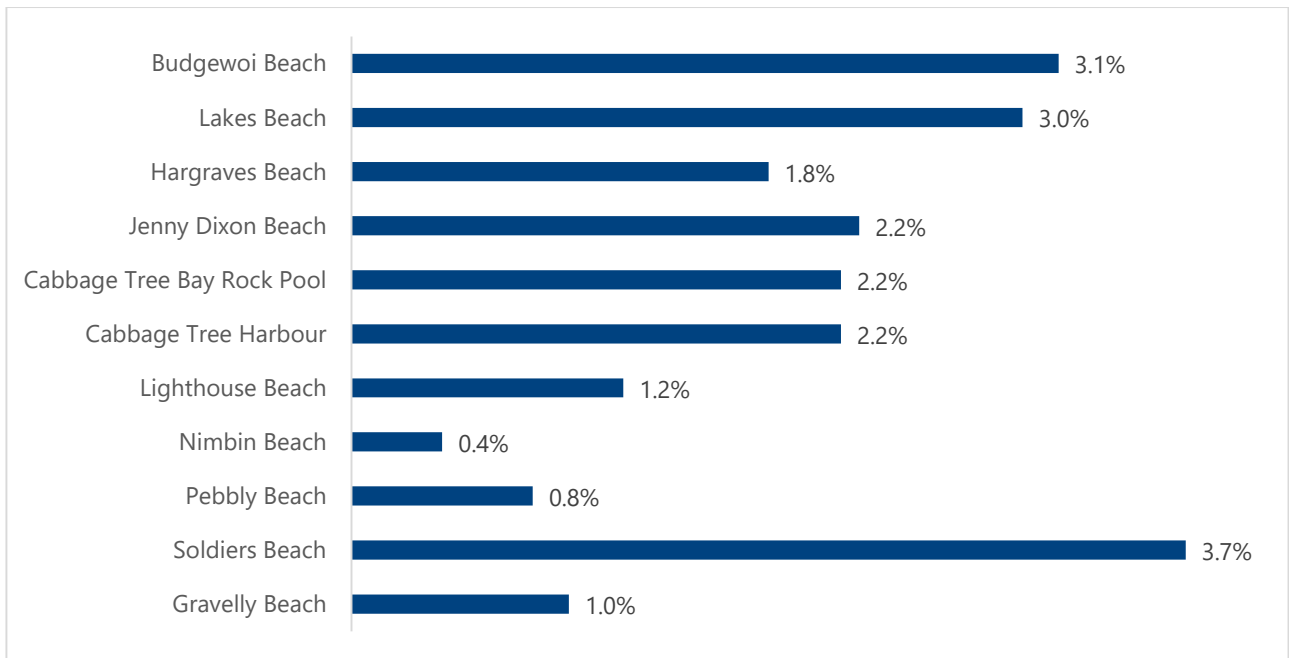
Figure 9: Which Central Coast Waterways do you use? (Lower Hawkesbury River)



Total selections= 147

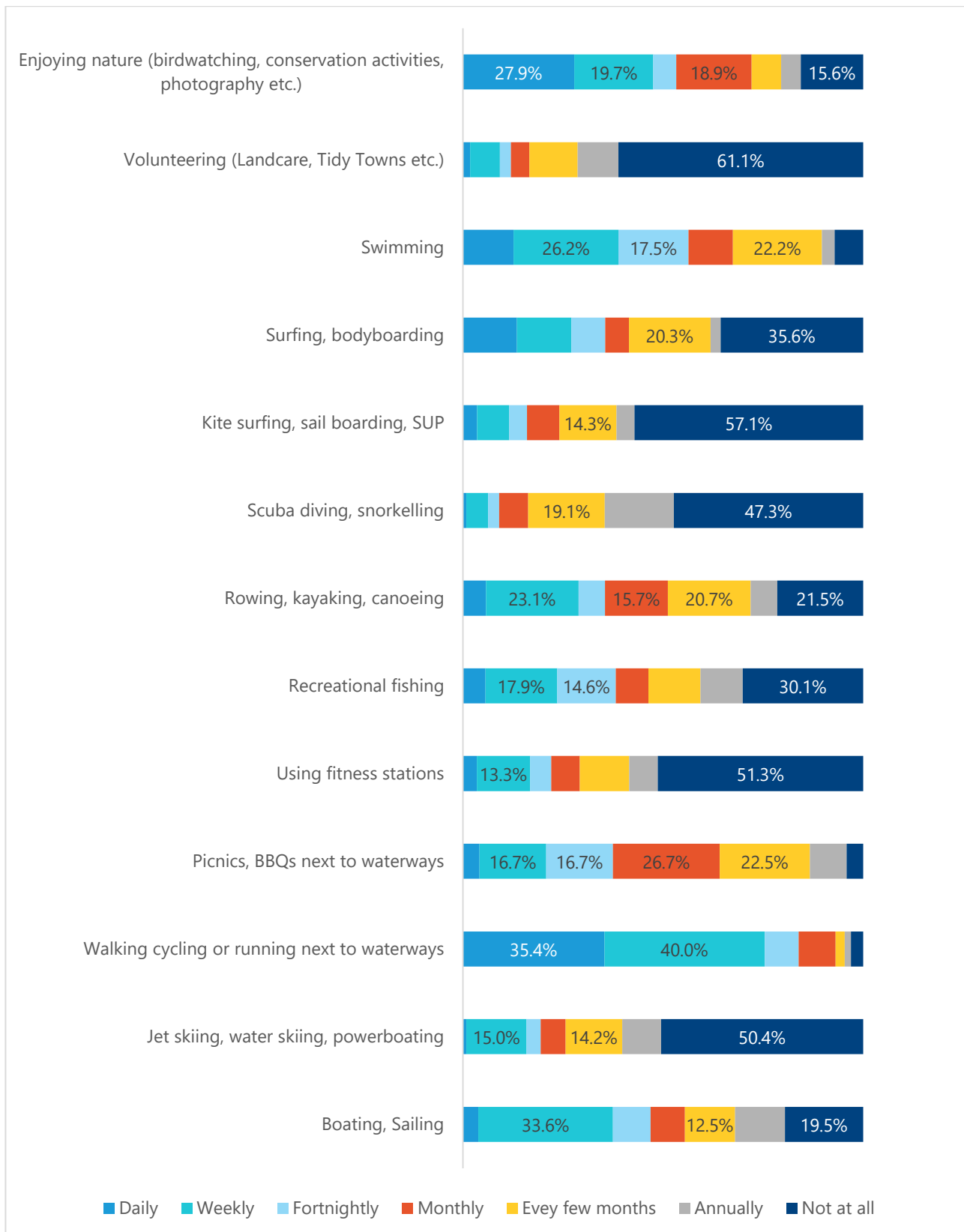
Figure 10: Which Central Coast Waterways do you use? (Beaches)





Total selections= 1251

Figure 11: There are many different recreational uses of waterways on the Central Coast, and different frequencies that these activities are undertaken. Please let us know how often you undertake the following activities:

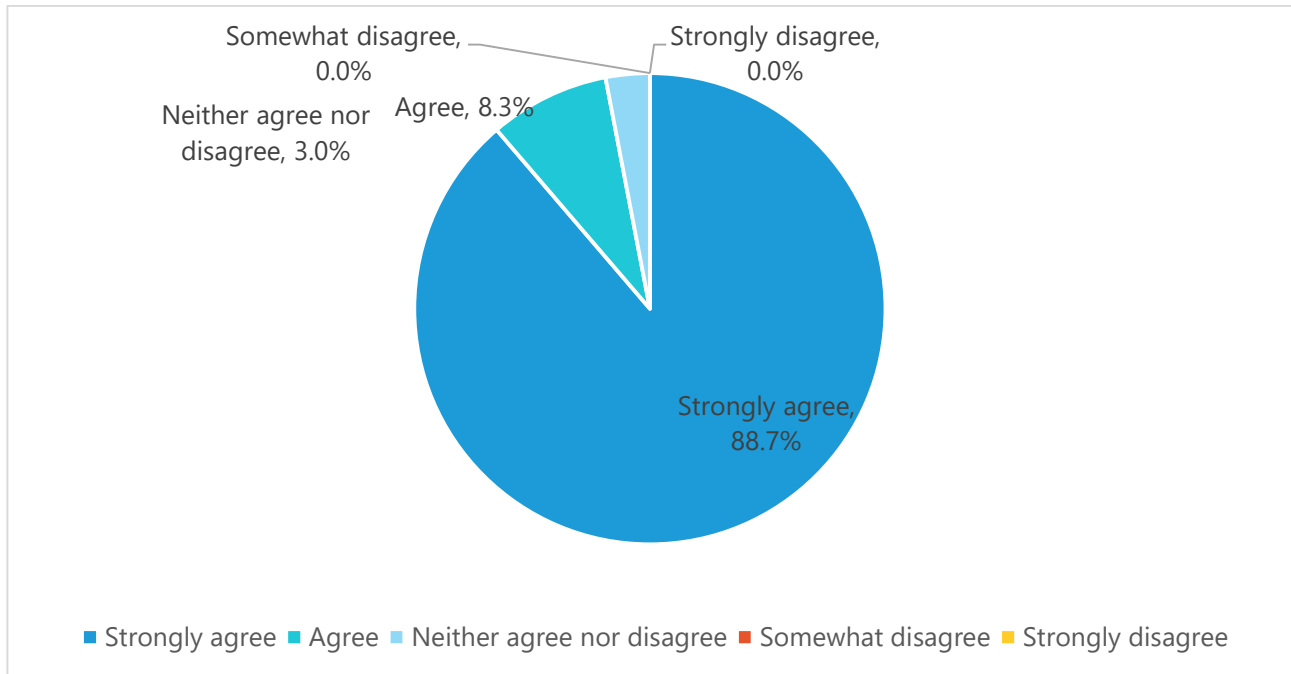


Maximum respondents= 130

Importance of Central Coast Waterways to you

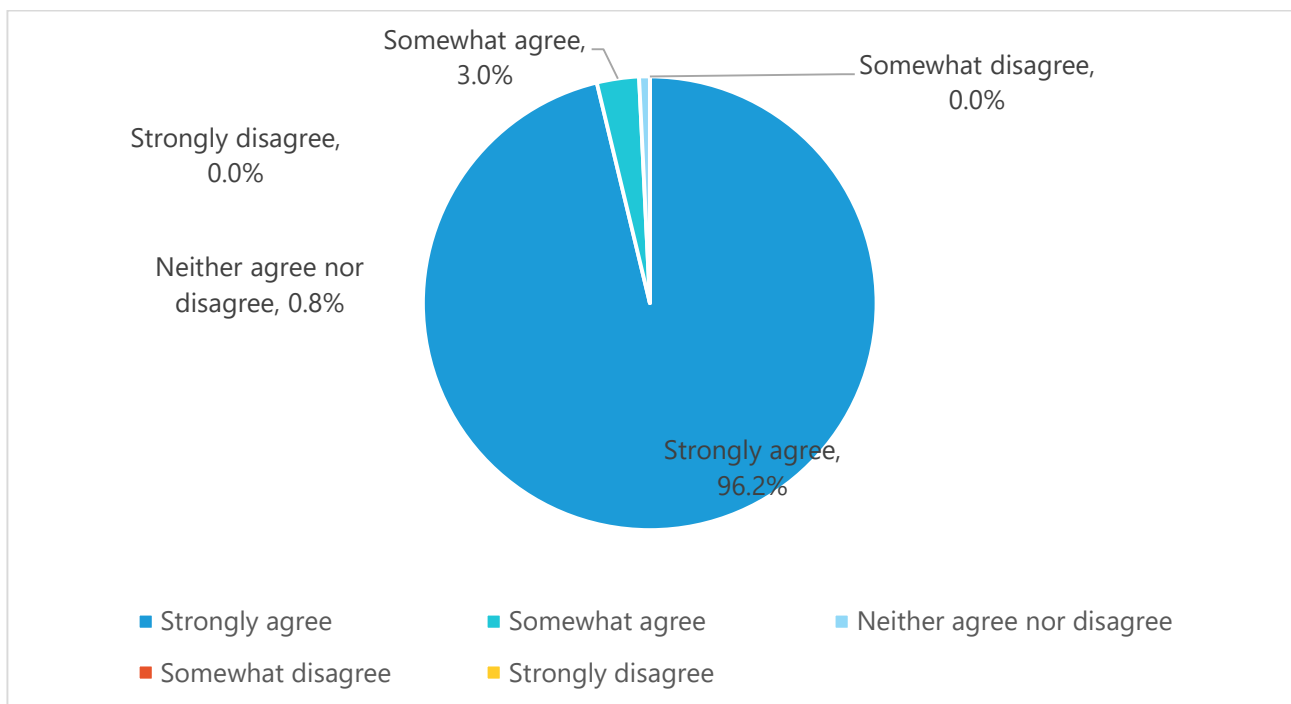
The statements presented in this section of the survey were designed to explore the communities views around the importance of Central Coast waterways both now and into the future.

Figure 12: Waterways are a significant reason I choose to live on the Central Coast.



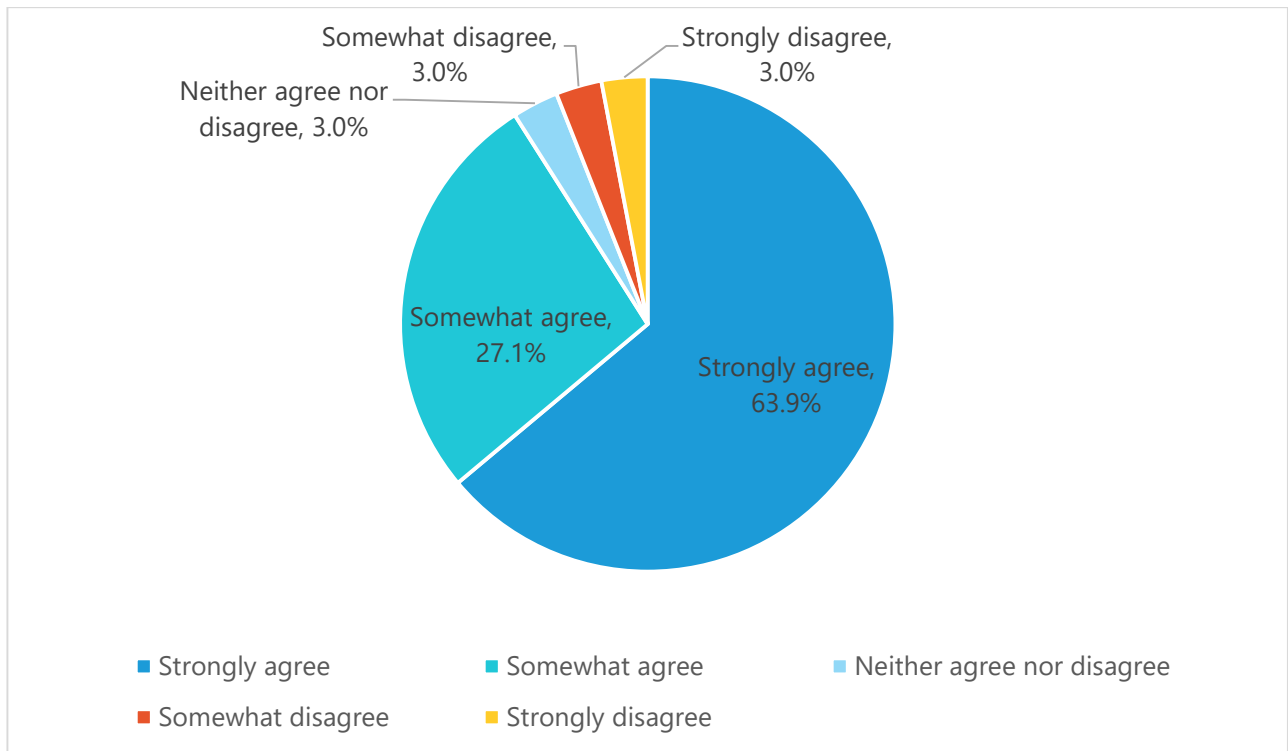
Total respondents=133

Figure 13: Waterways contribute to my personal health and wellbeing (e.g. fitness, relaxation, happiness, lifestyle, sense of place, cultural heritage).



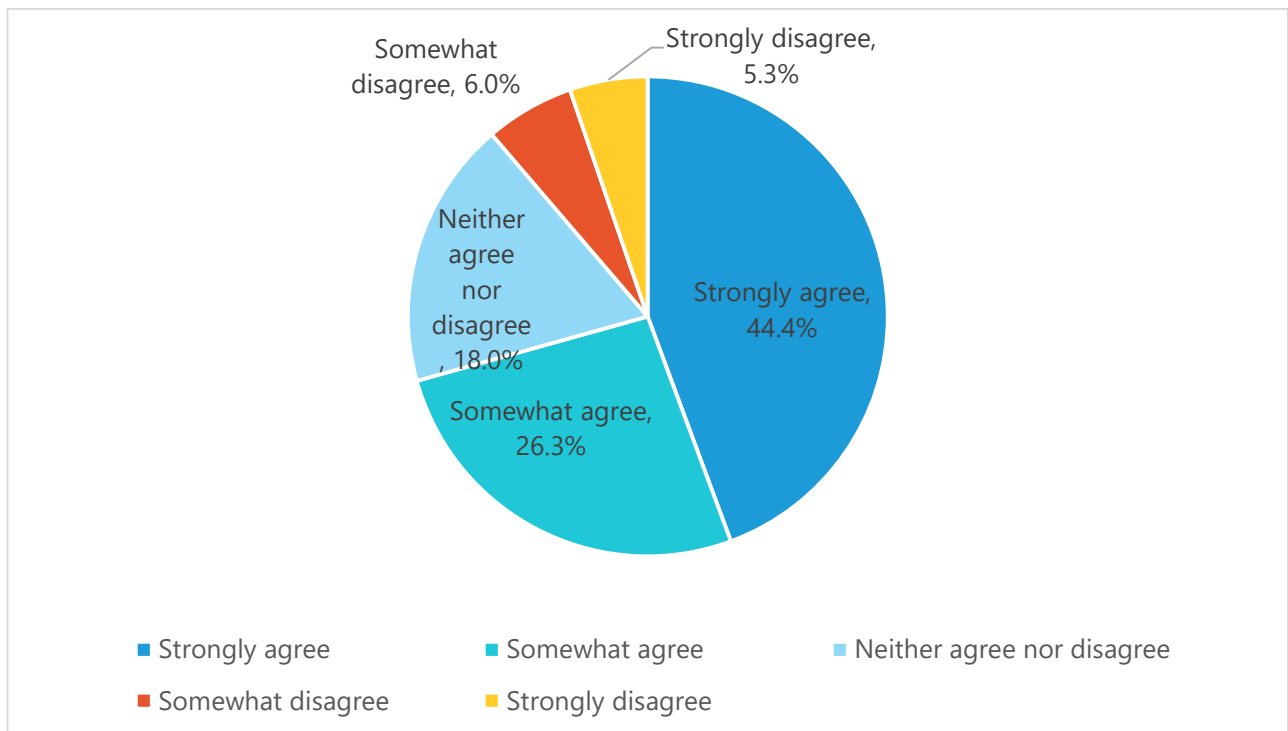
Total respondents=133

Figure 14: If waterway access, safety or condition declined significantly I would reduce the frequency I visit and use waterways.



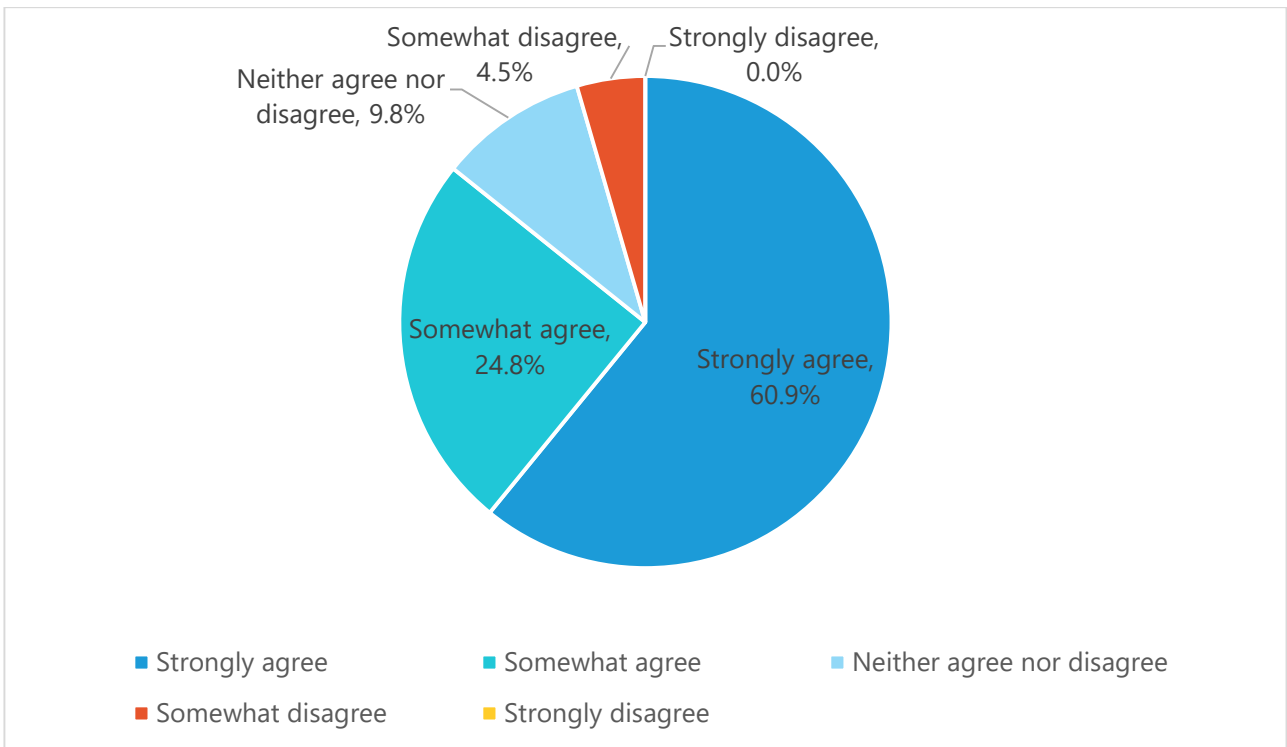
Total respondents=133

Figure 15: If waterway access, safety or condition declined significantly I would consider moving from the Central Coast to another location.



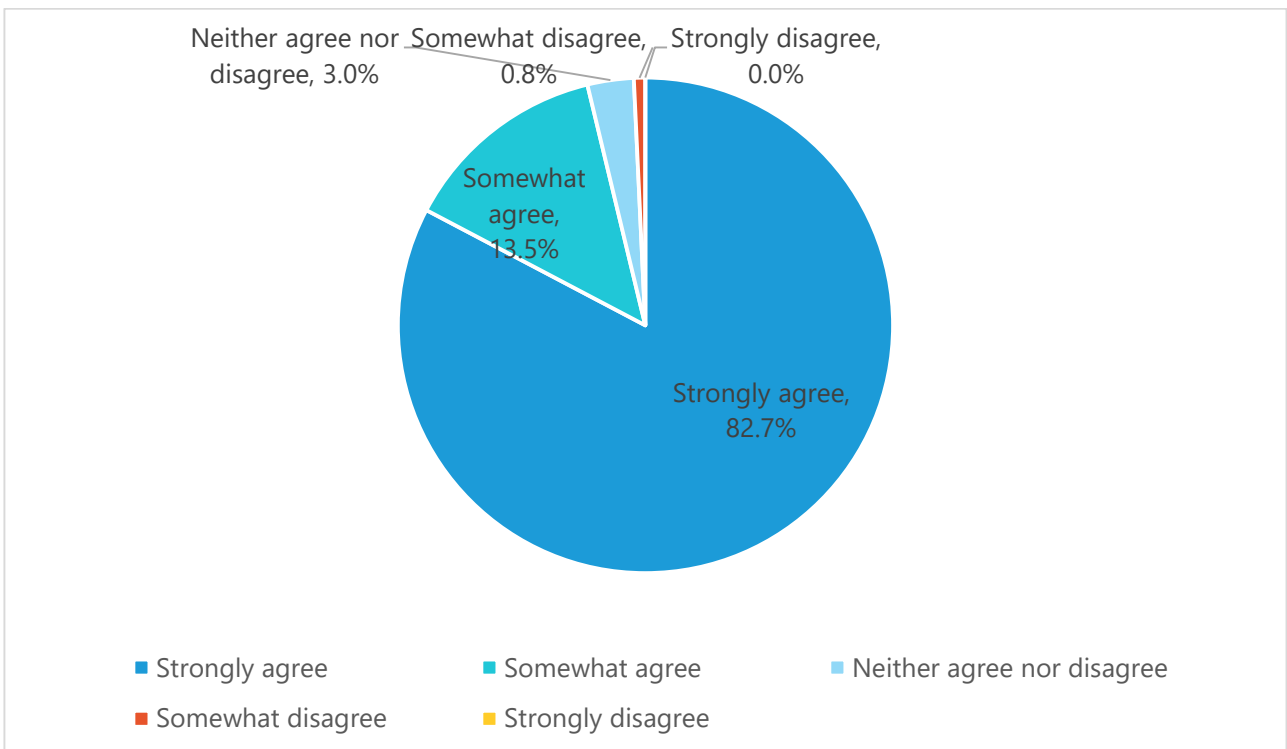
Total respondents=133

Figure 16: More should be done to enhance access to waterways (e.g. shared pathways, jetties, boat ramps etc).



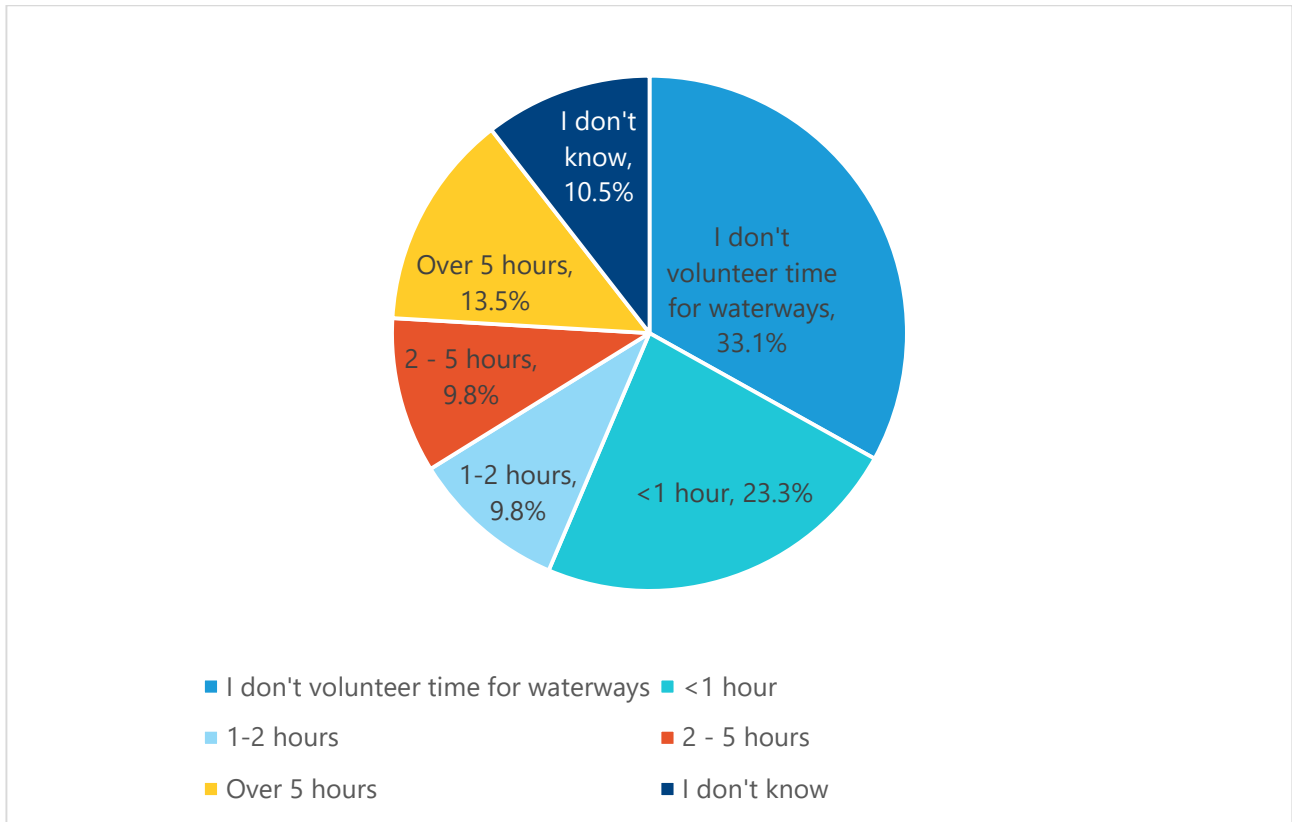
Total respondents=133

Figure 17: More should be done to protect and enhance the natural aspects of waterways such as the cleanliness of water, health of coastal vegetation, and the protection of wildlife.



Total respondents=133

Figure 18: Many people on the Central Coast volunteer time to help care for waterways or assist with events at waterways. What best describes the number of hours people from your household would undertake voluntary waterways work per month (this includes volunteer work done within the catchment e.g tidy towns, Landcare).

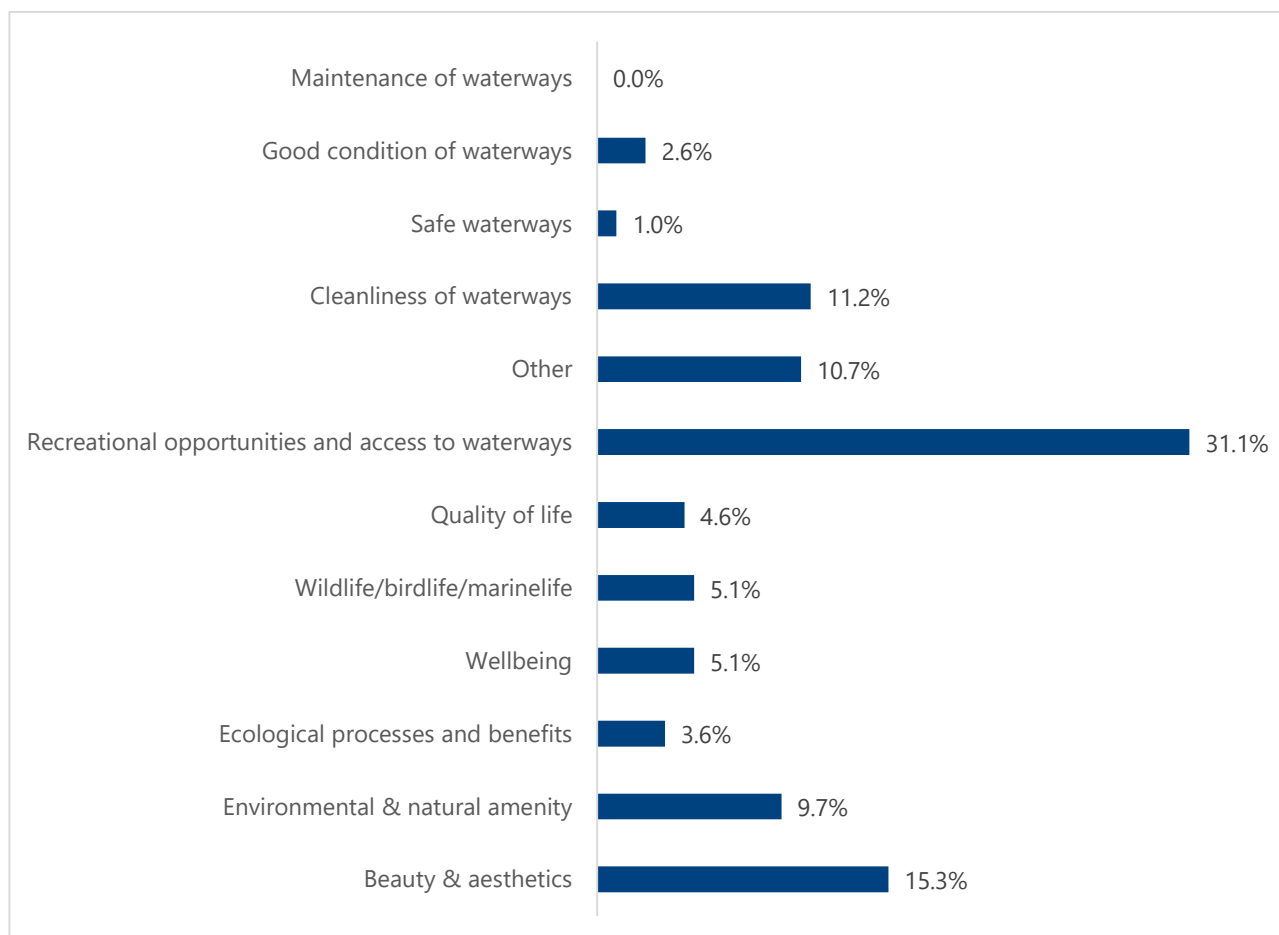


Total respondents=133

Values and threats to Central Coast waterways

These questions were designed to understand what the community value about waterways, which threats they are aware of and what they think the most important focus areas for the Coastal Management Programs are.

Figure 19: What do you value most about Central Coast waterways? – coded information

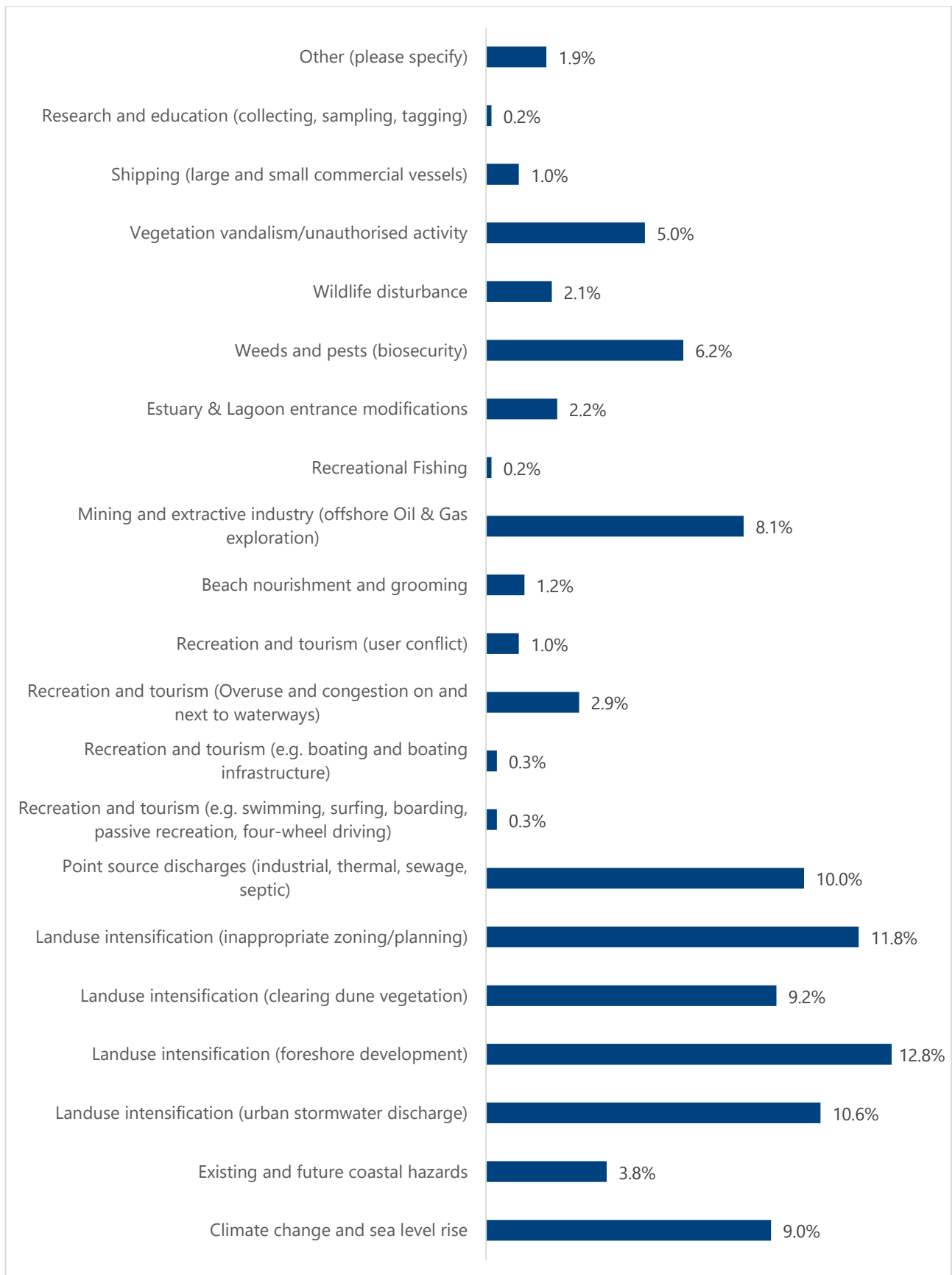


Codes applied=196

This question provided participants with the option to provide further comments. Below is an example of some of the comments received from those who indicated that they use Lake Macquarie:

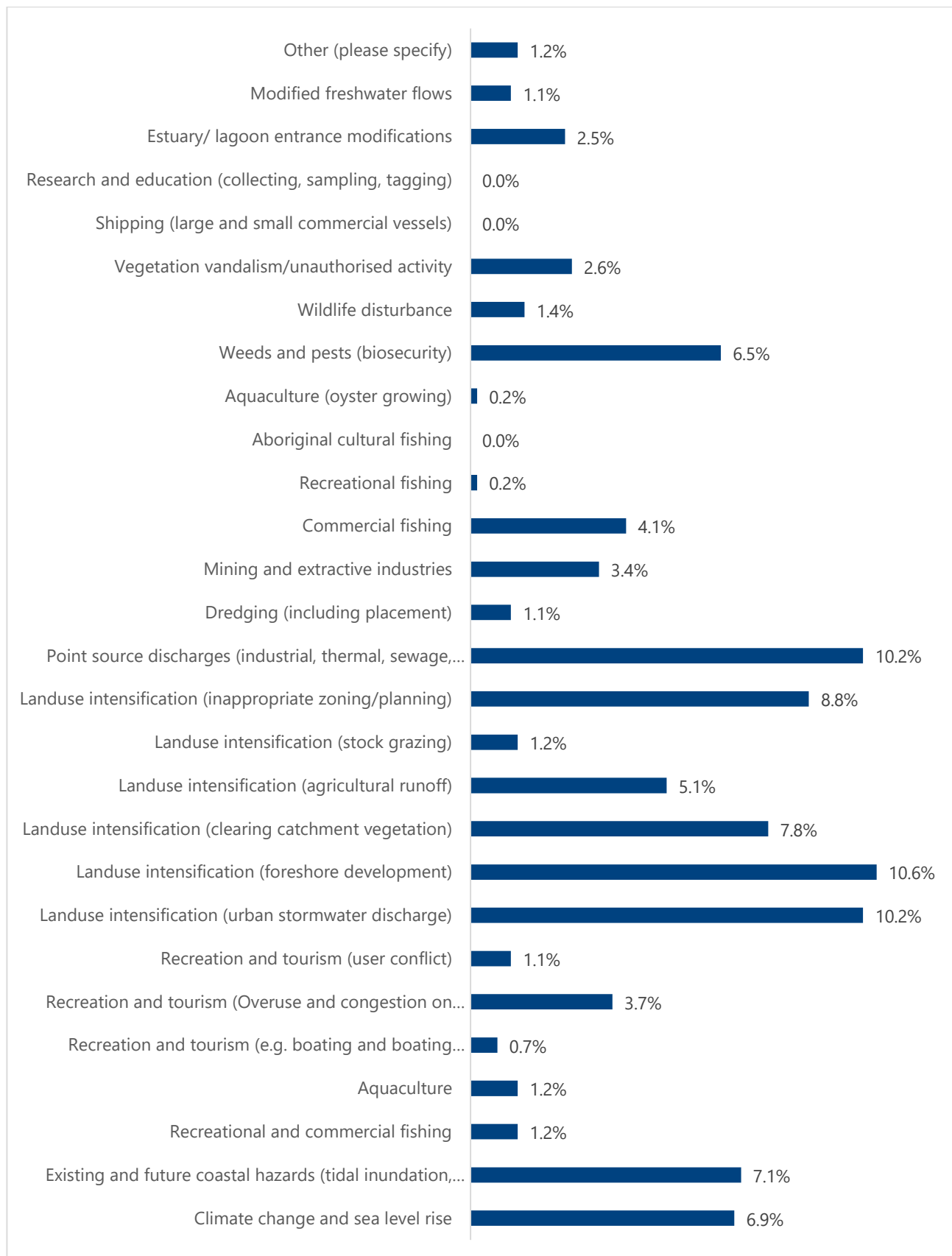
- Lake Macquarie. Central coast council jewel in the crown.
- I love that almost every suburb on the coast is surrounded by a waterway.
- Australian bass and estuary perch catch and release sport fishing.
- Recreation, relaxation, exercise.
- Beauty, cleanliness and closeness to us. Abundance.
- That they remain clean and safe and that access for water sports is maintained and improved.
- Healthy waterways, vegetation and fauna all working together to support unique biodiversity in our local area. Also our recreational enjoyment.

Figure 20: Please select what you believe are the top five greatest threats to Central Coast beaches.



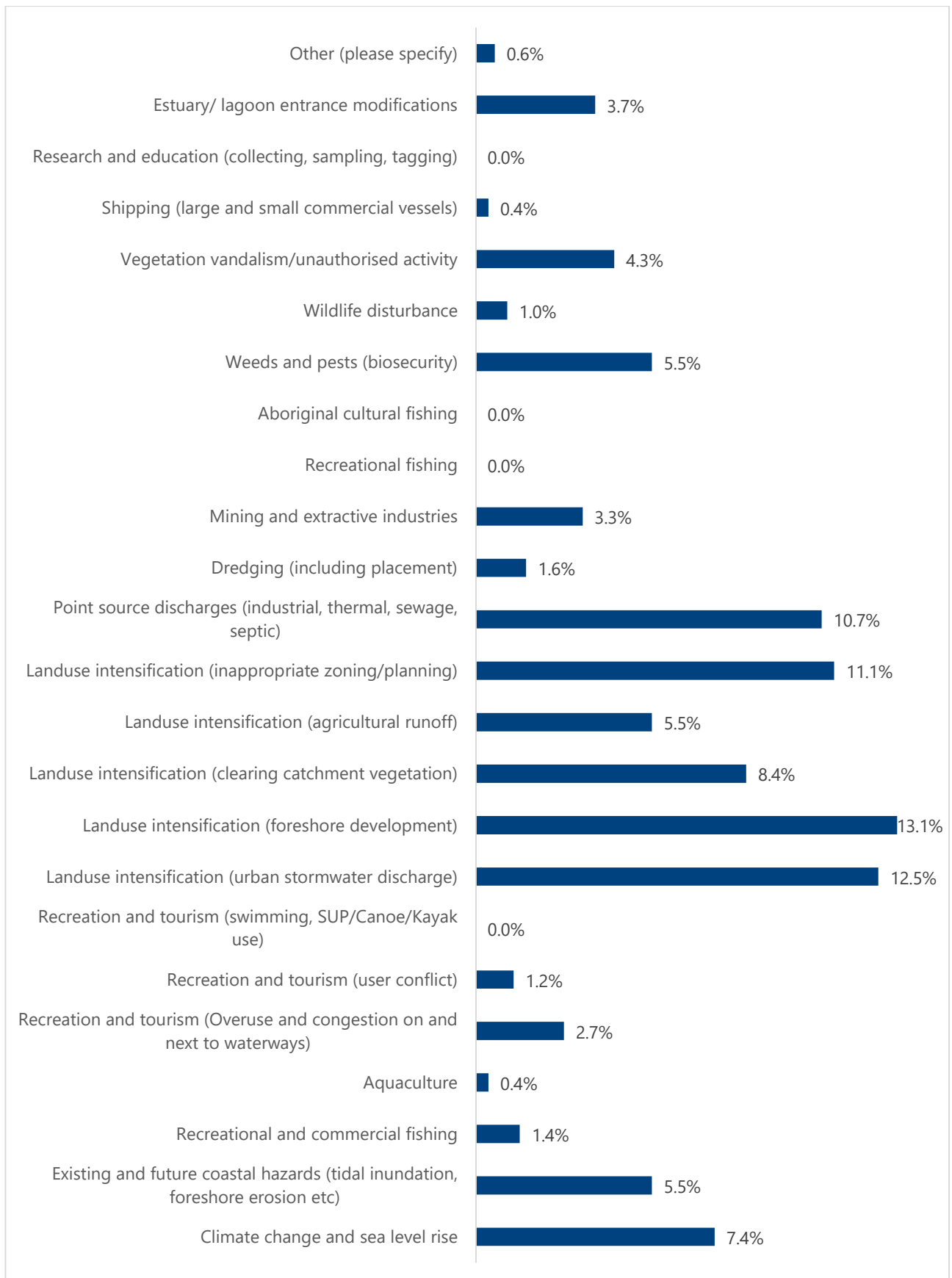
Total selections=578

Figure 21: Please select what you believe are the top five greatest threats to Central Coast lakes & estuaries.



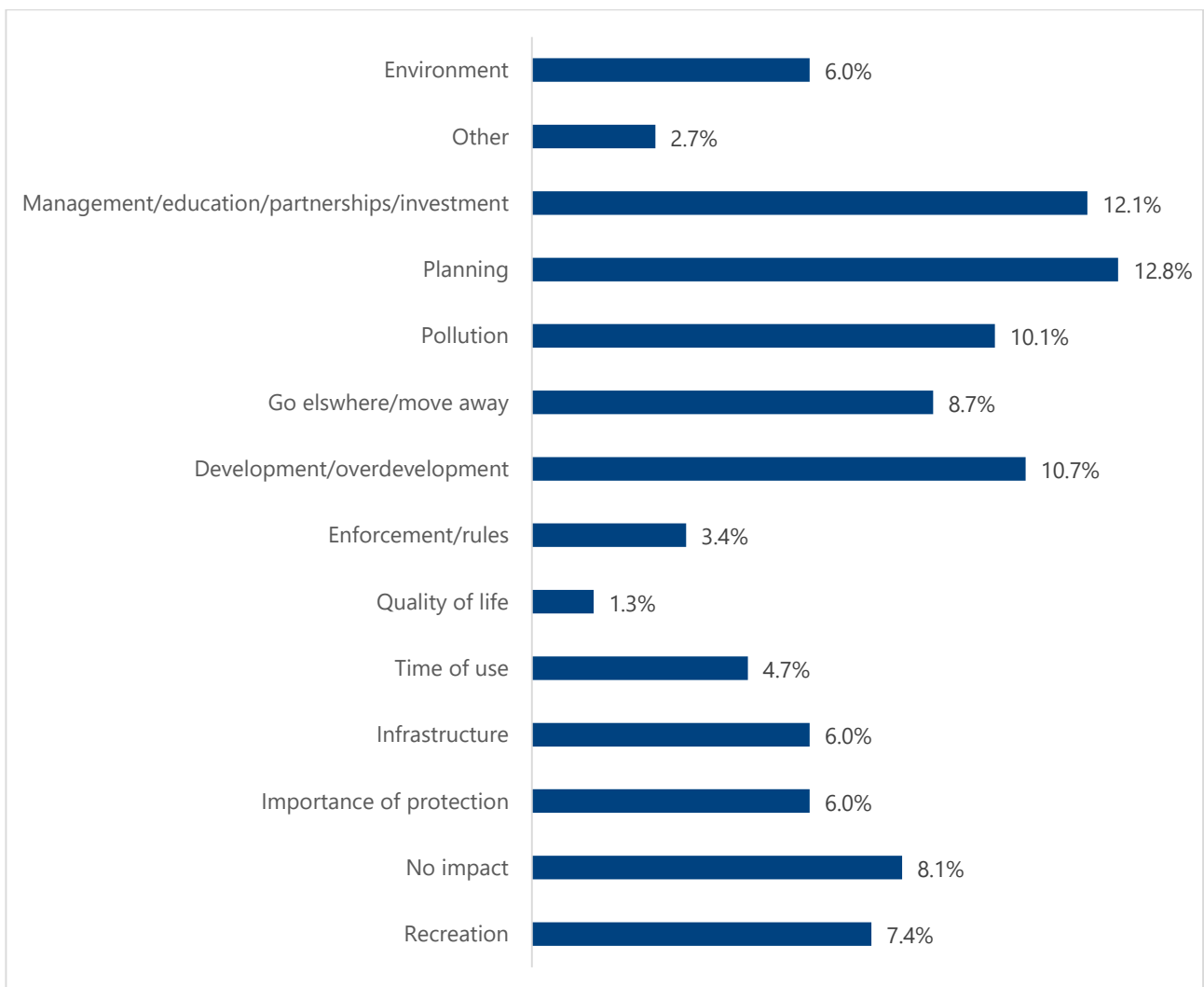
Total selections=567

Figure 22: Please select what you believe are the top five greatest threats to Central Coast lagoons.



Total selections=513

Figure 23: Given the projected population growth on the Central Coast (additional 75,500 residents by 2036) and greater risks associated with the threats listed above, how might this change your use of waterways and views on waterways? – coded information

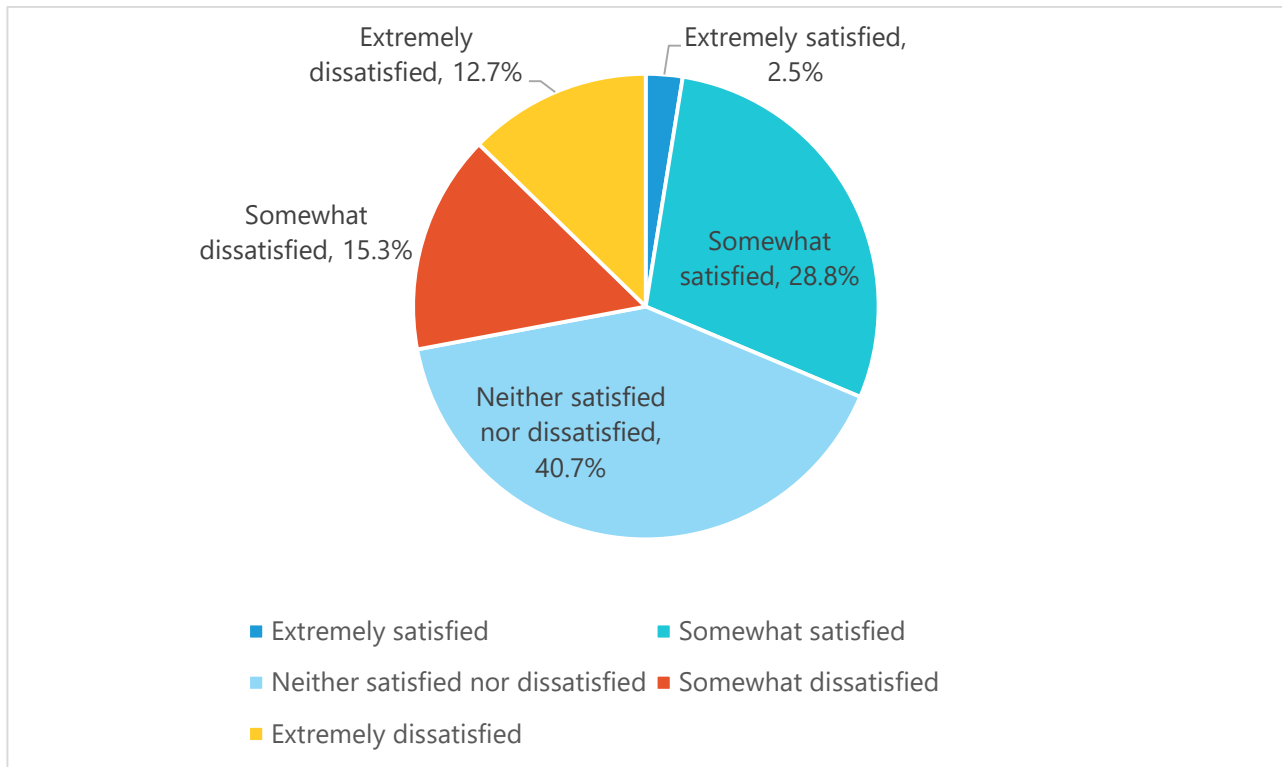


Codes applied=149

Management of Central Coast waterways

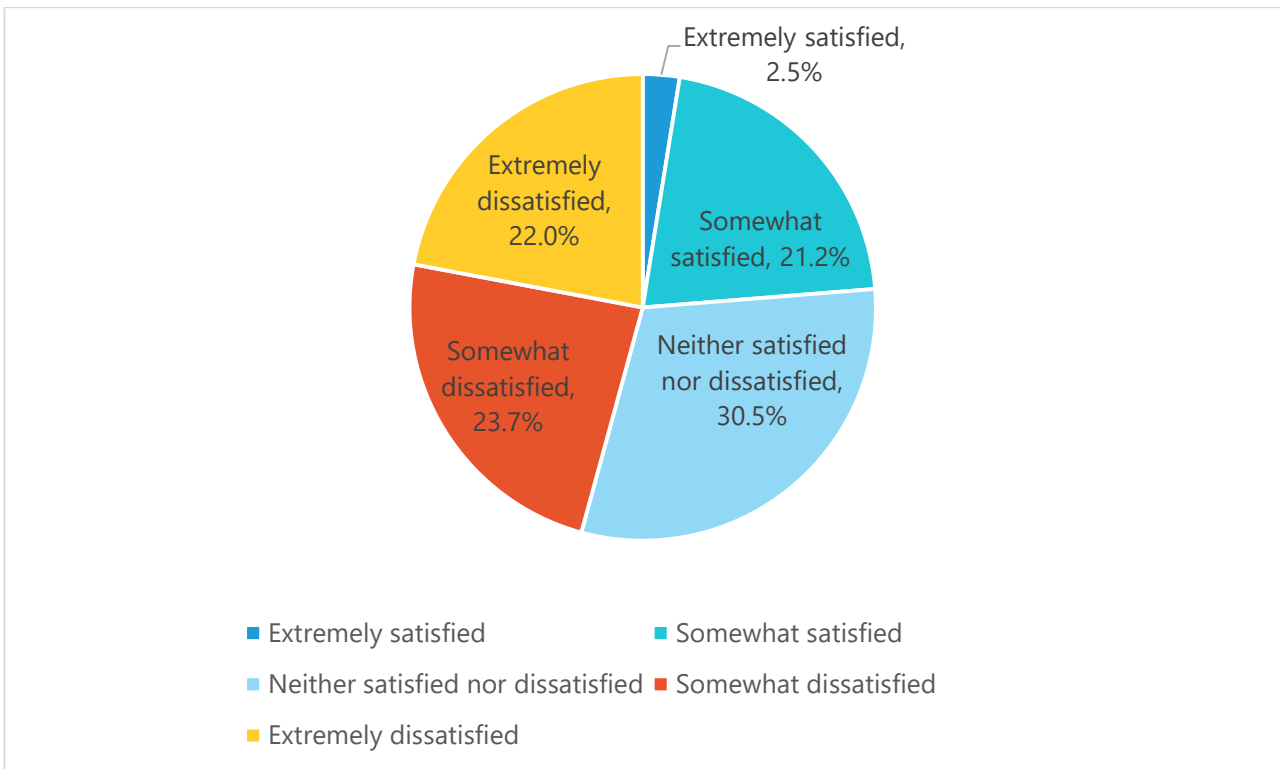
The statements presented in this section of the survey were designed to explore the level of satisfaction relating to the management of Central Coast waterways.

Figure 24: Over the last 3 years, how satisfied are you with the improvement of beaches (including the dunes, rocky shores and lagoons)?



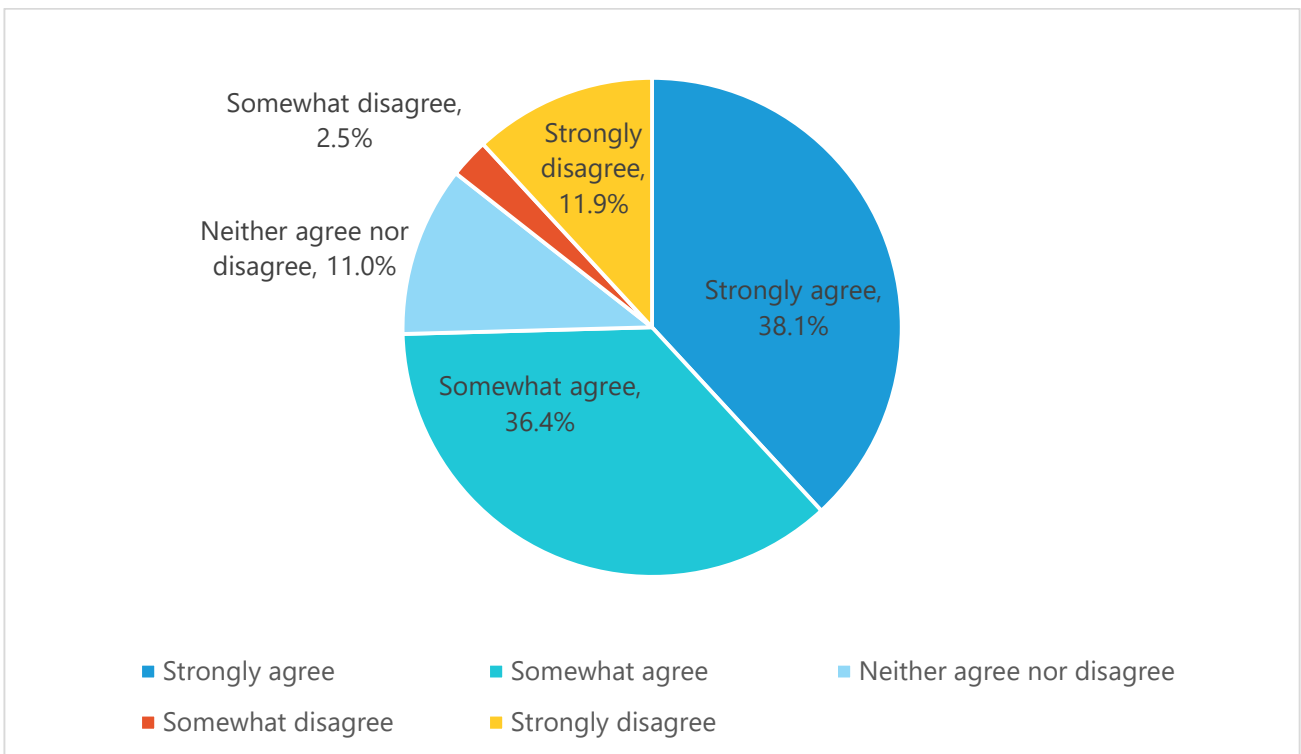
Total respondents=118

Figure 25: Over the last 3 years, how satisfied are you with the improvement of lakes, estuaries and lagoons (including foreshores, rivers, creeks and catchments)?



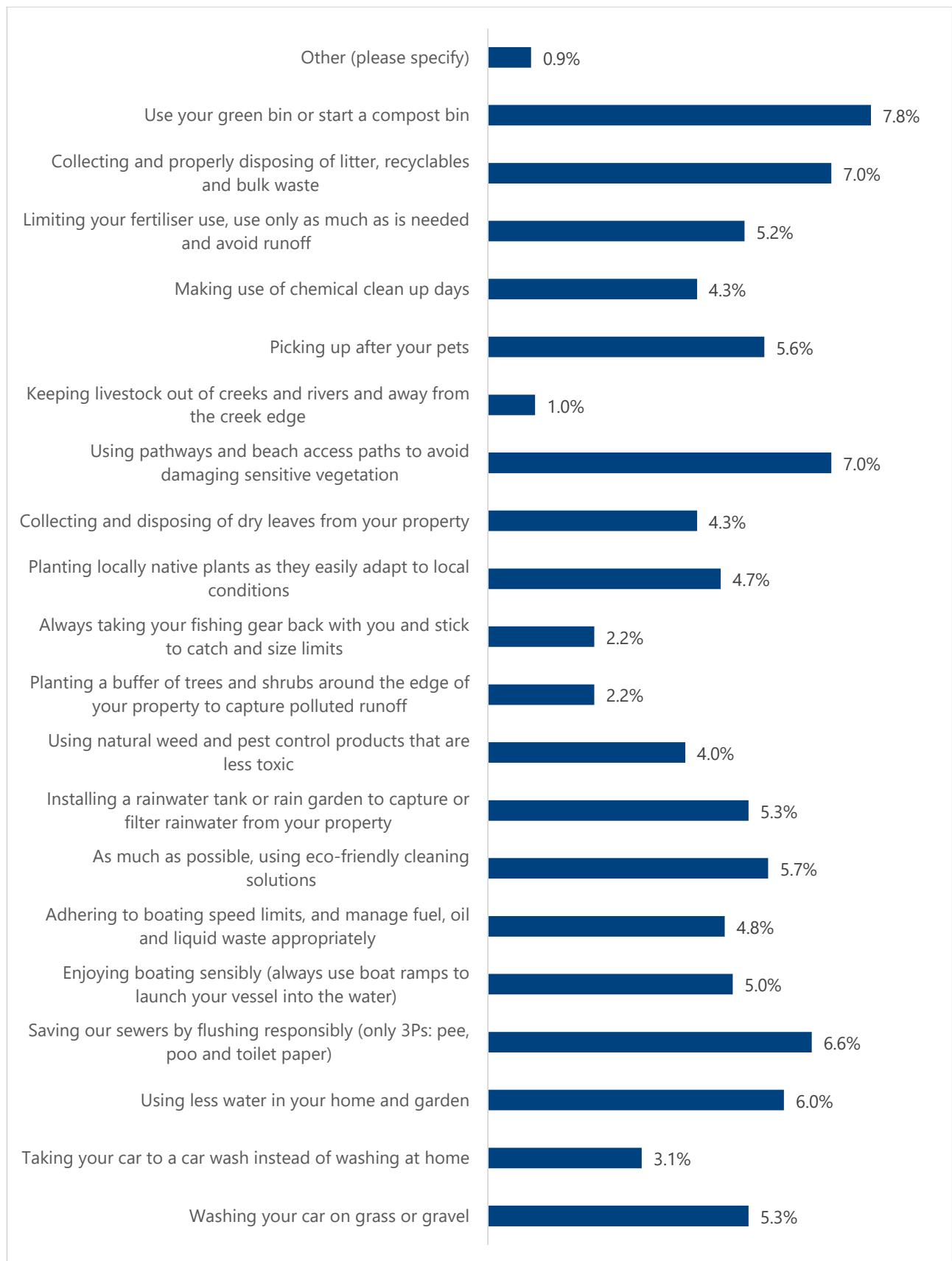
Total respondents=118

Figure 26: I would support more resources being used for the management of our waterways and coast, even if it meant a very small increase in my property rates or rent.



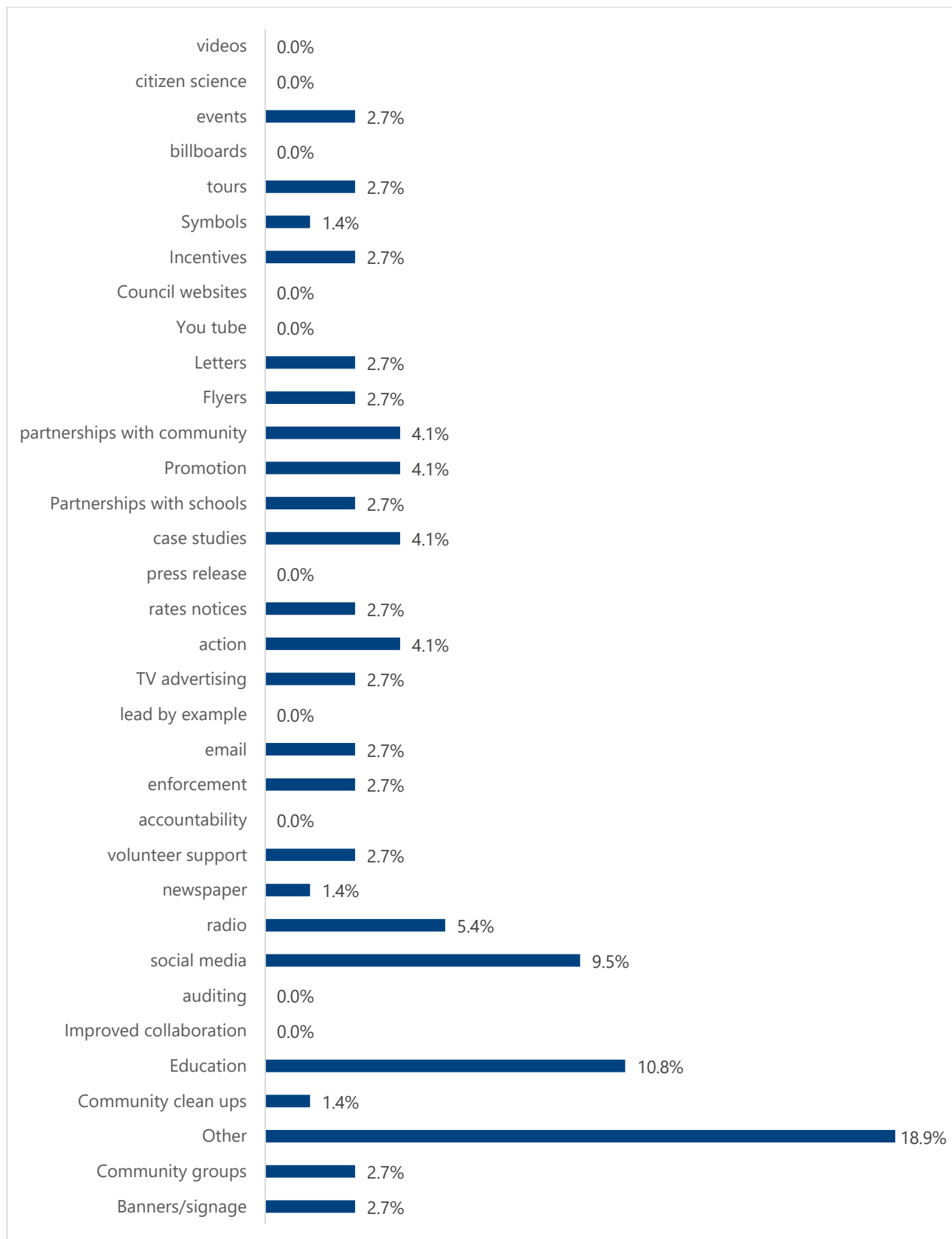
Total respondents=118

Figure 27: Many of the impacts to our waterways come from the areas surrounding them. Please select the actions you take at home or work to help protect our waterways:



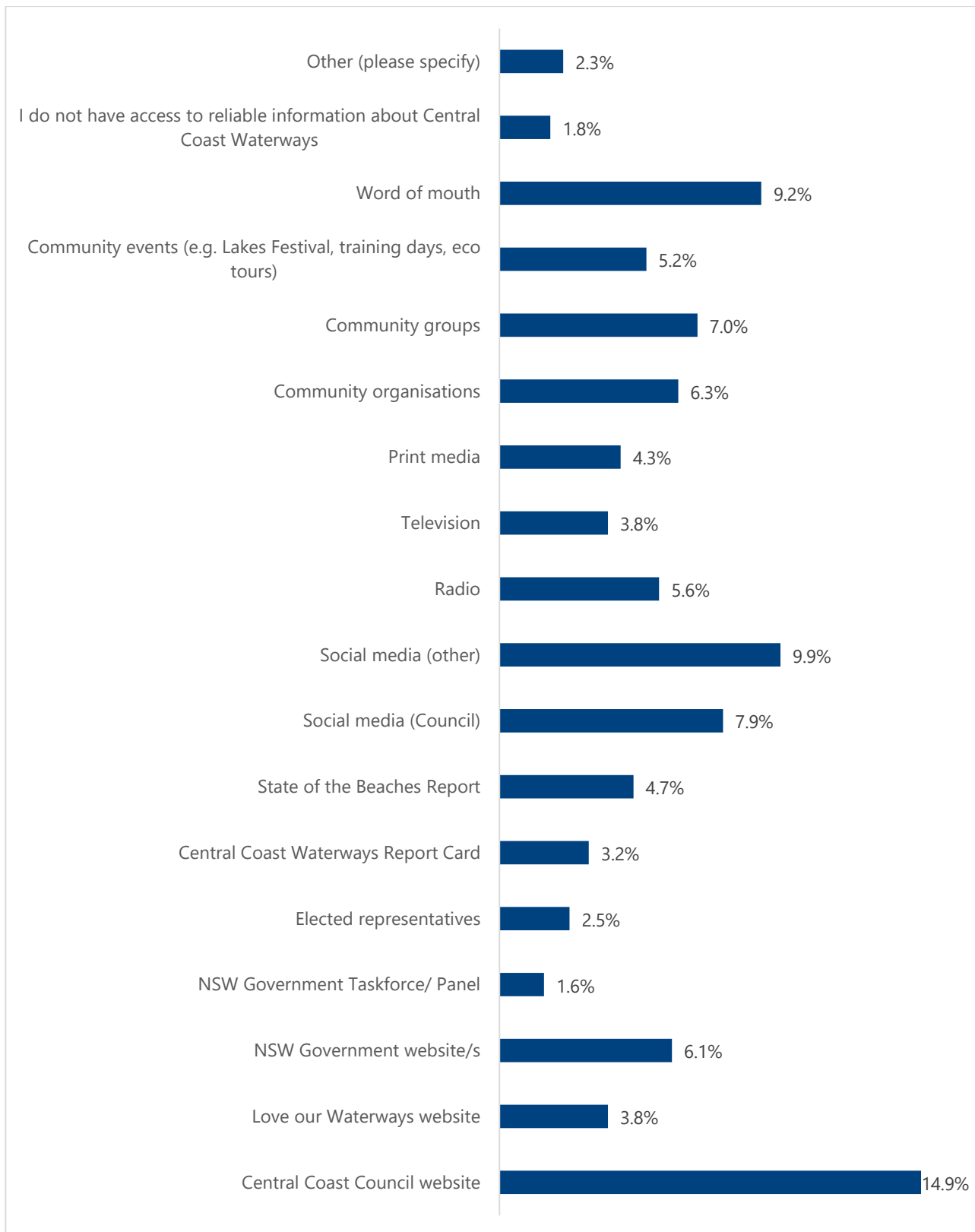
Total selections=1246

Figure 28: Tell us how you think Council can spread the word about the value of Central Coast Waterways and how we can all help to improve and protect them into the future: - coded information



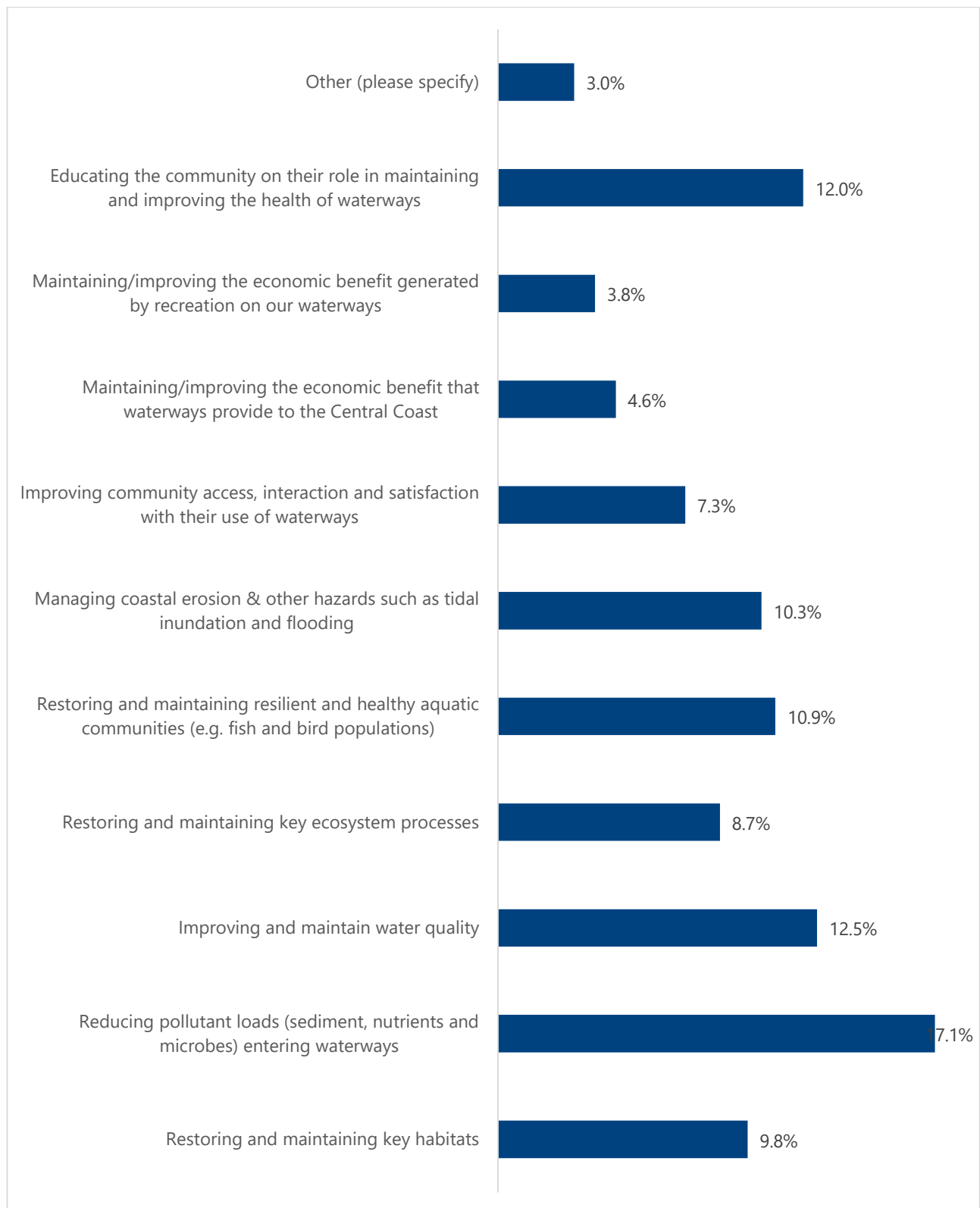
Codes applied=74

Figure 29: When looking for information about Central Coast Waterways, where do you look?



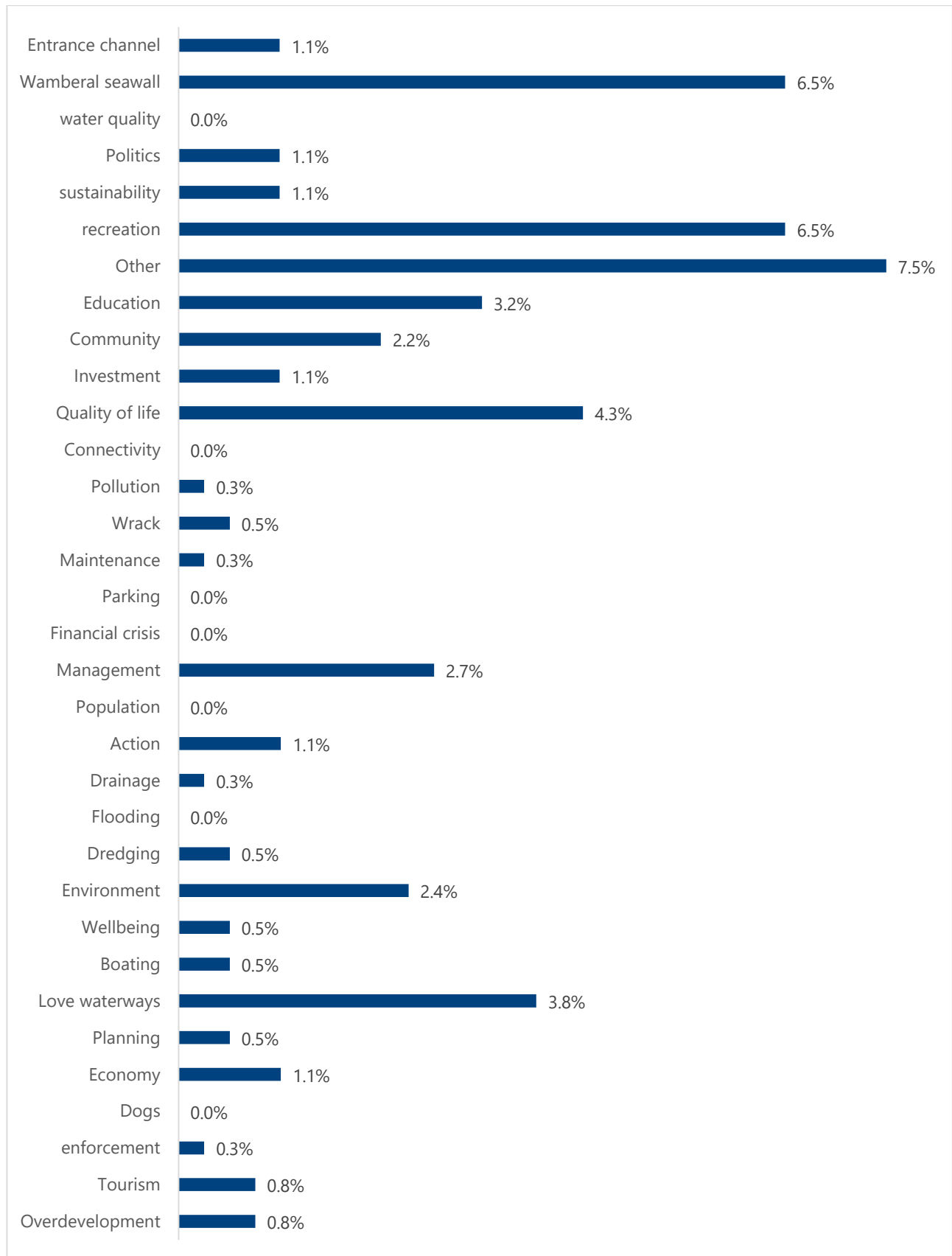
Total selections=444

Figure 30: What should the focus areas for the Coastal Management Programs (CMP) be? *Participants could select up to 3.*



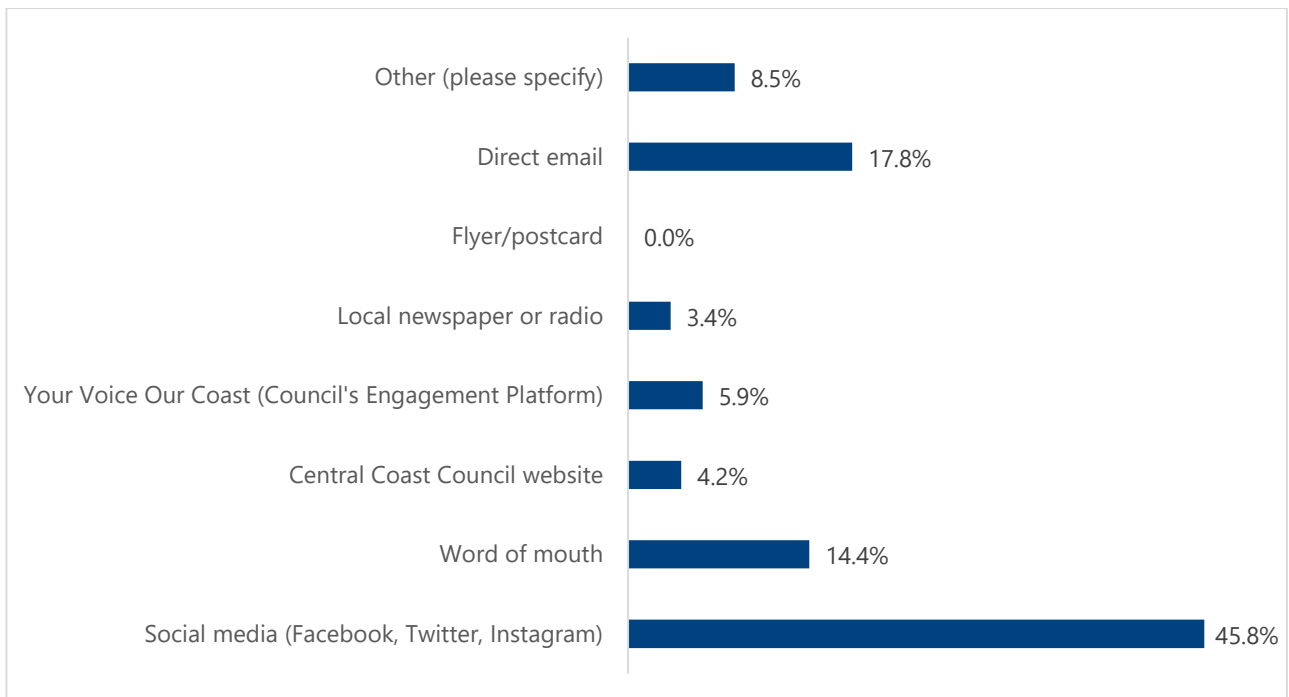
Total selections=368

Figure 31: Do you have any further comments about the importance of waterways on the Central Coast? – coded information



Codes applied=93

Figure 32: How did you hear about this survey?

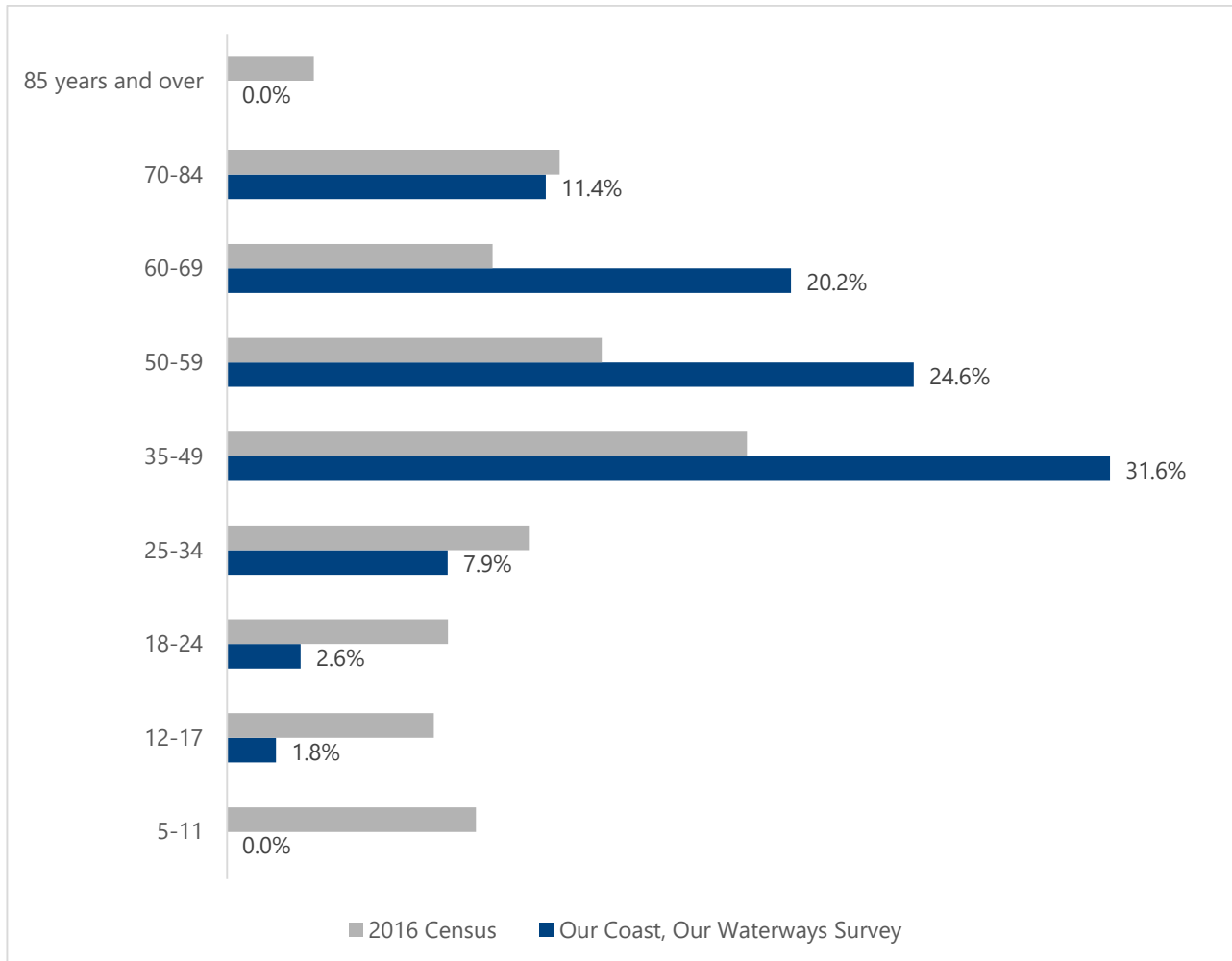


Total selections=118

About you and your household!

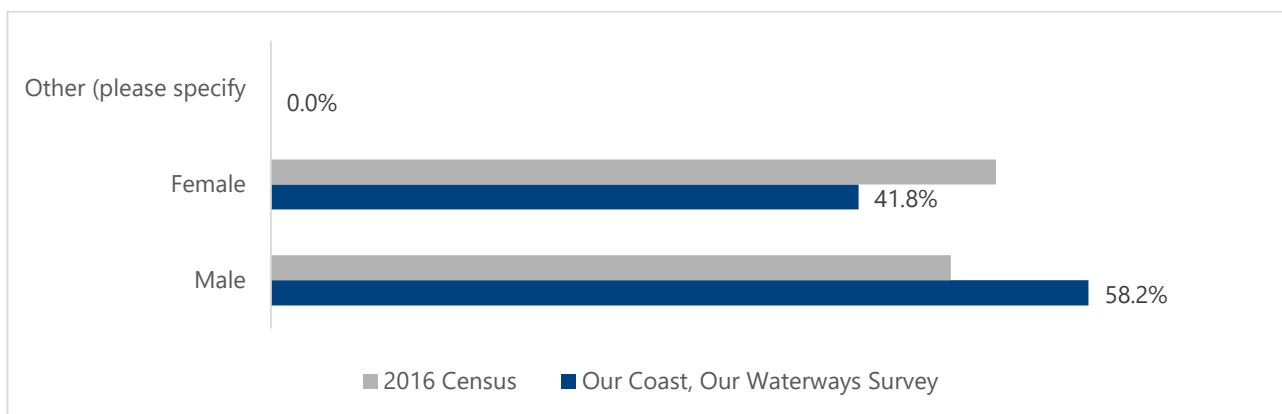
The questions asked in this section of the survey were not mandatory however responses to these questions allow us to further analyse the responses supplied by participants.

Figure 33: What is your age?



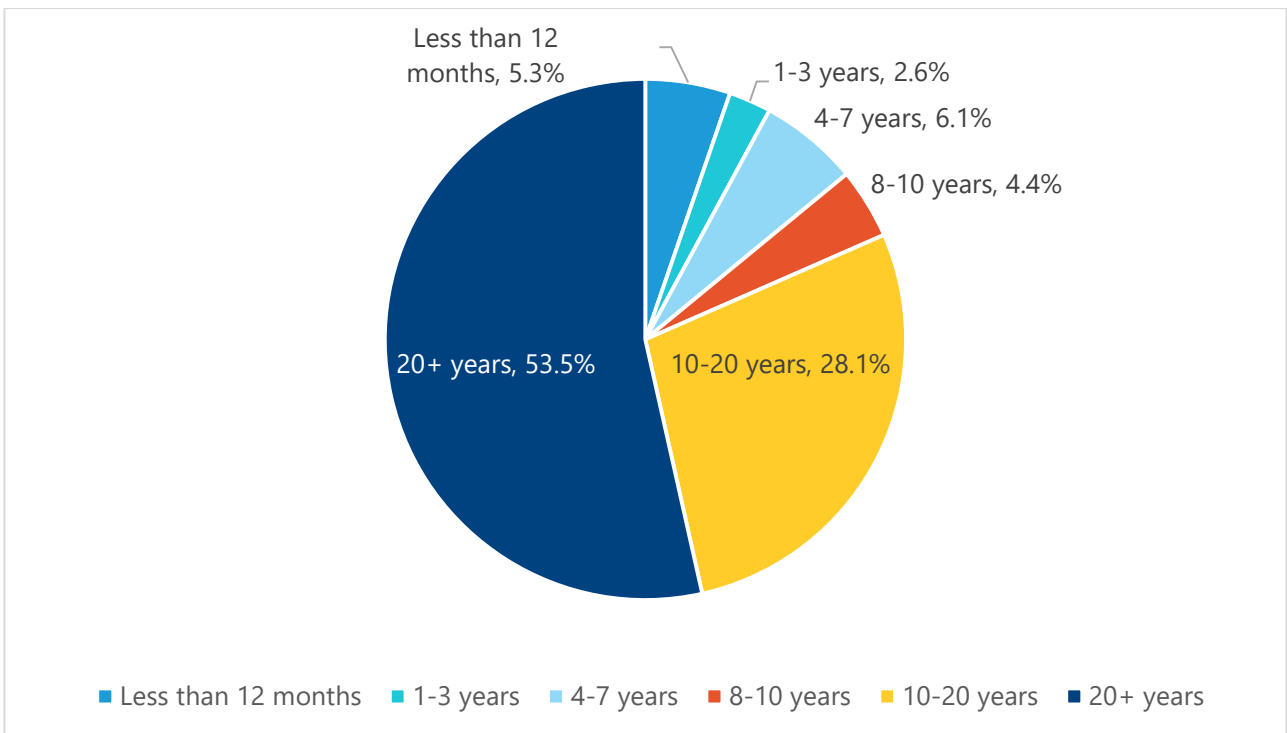
Total respondents=114

Figure 34: What is your gender?



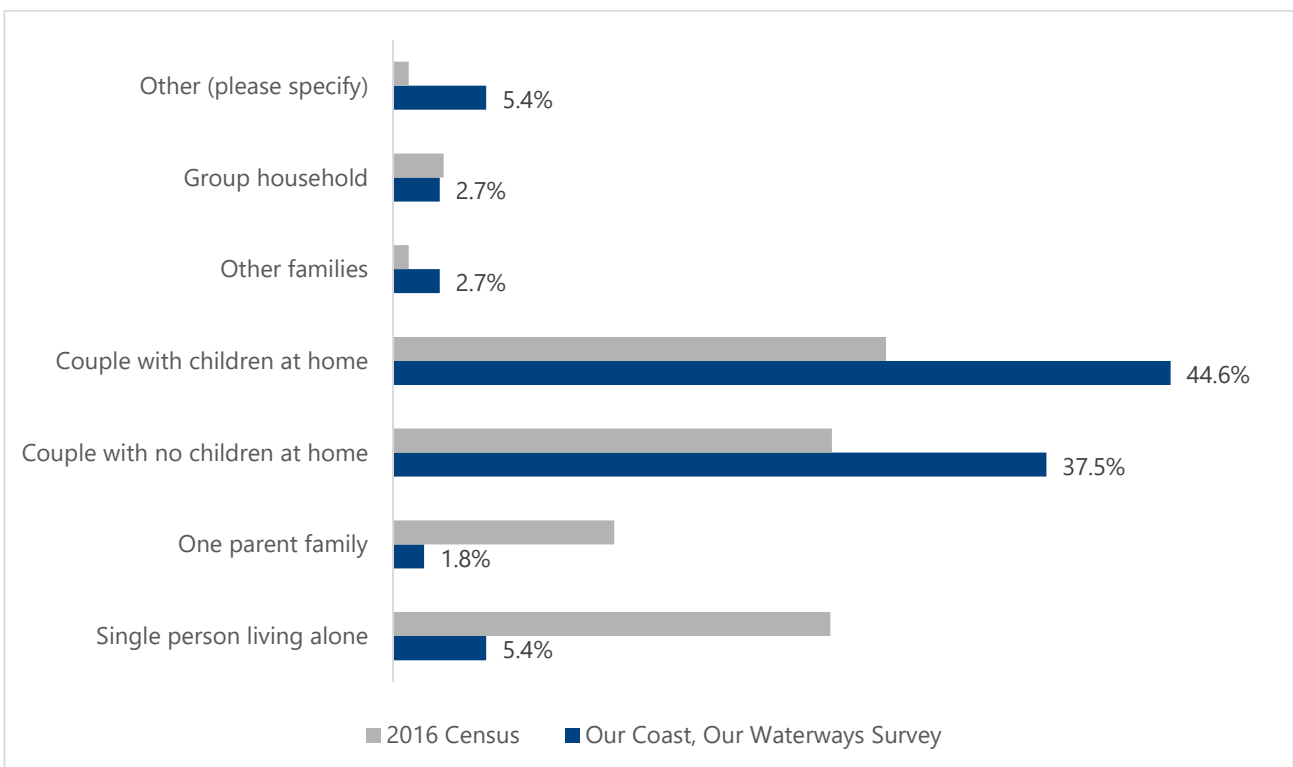
Total respondents=110

Figure 35: How long have you lived on the Central Coast?



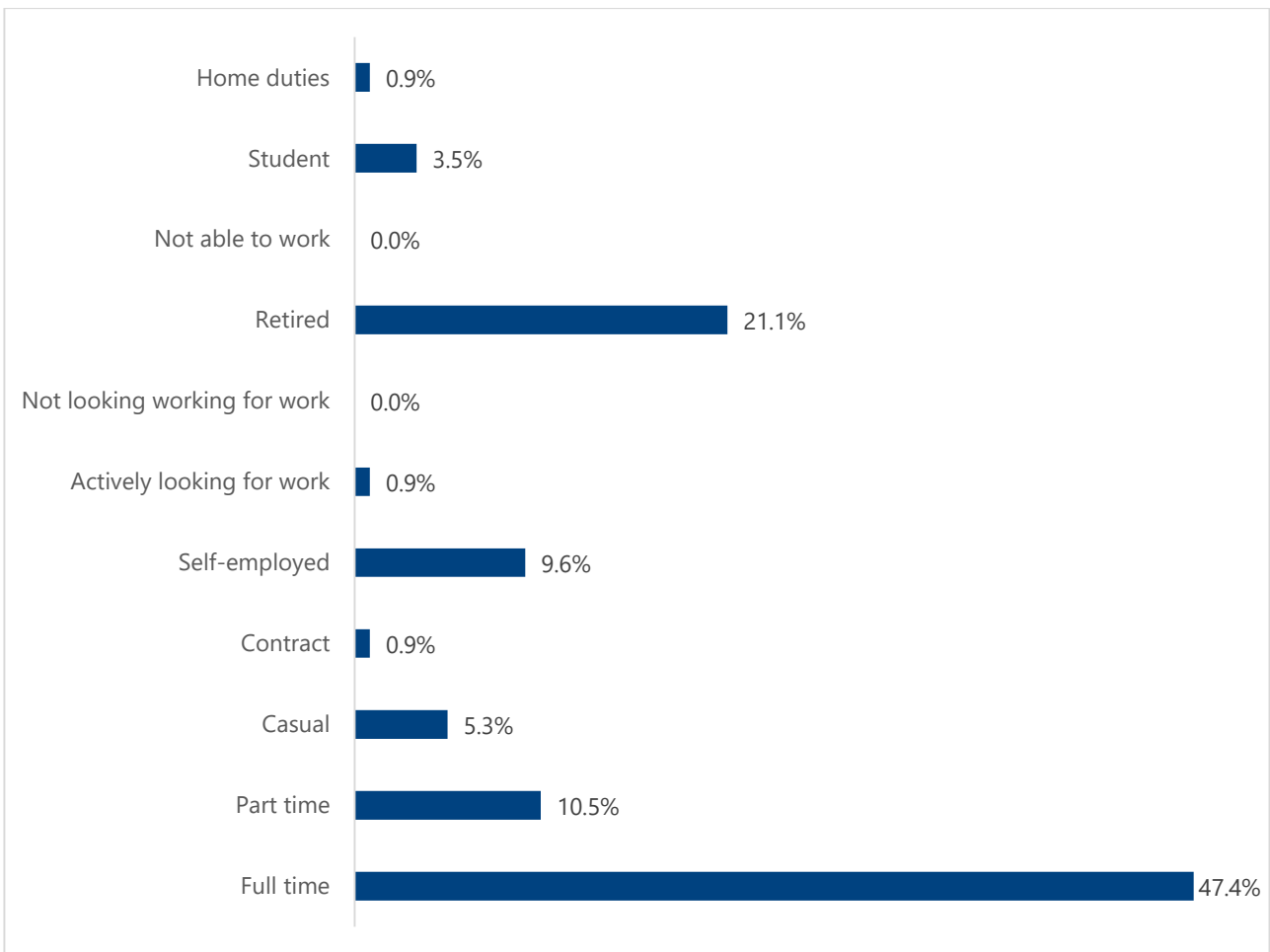
Total respondents=114

Figure 36: What is your household type?



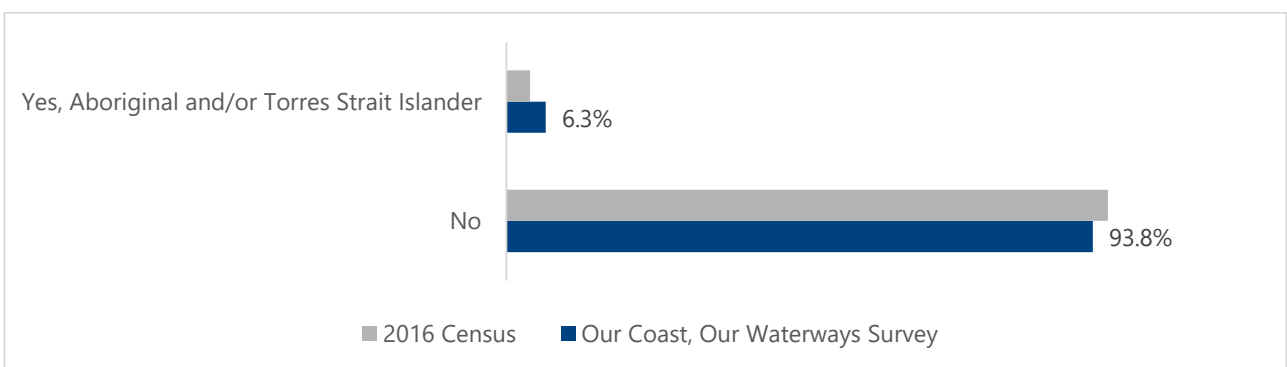
Total respondents=112

Figure 37: What is your employment type?



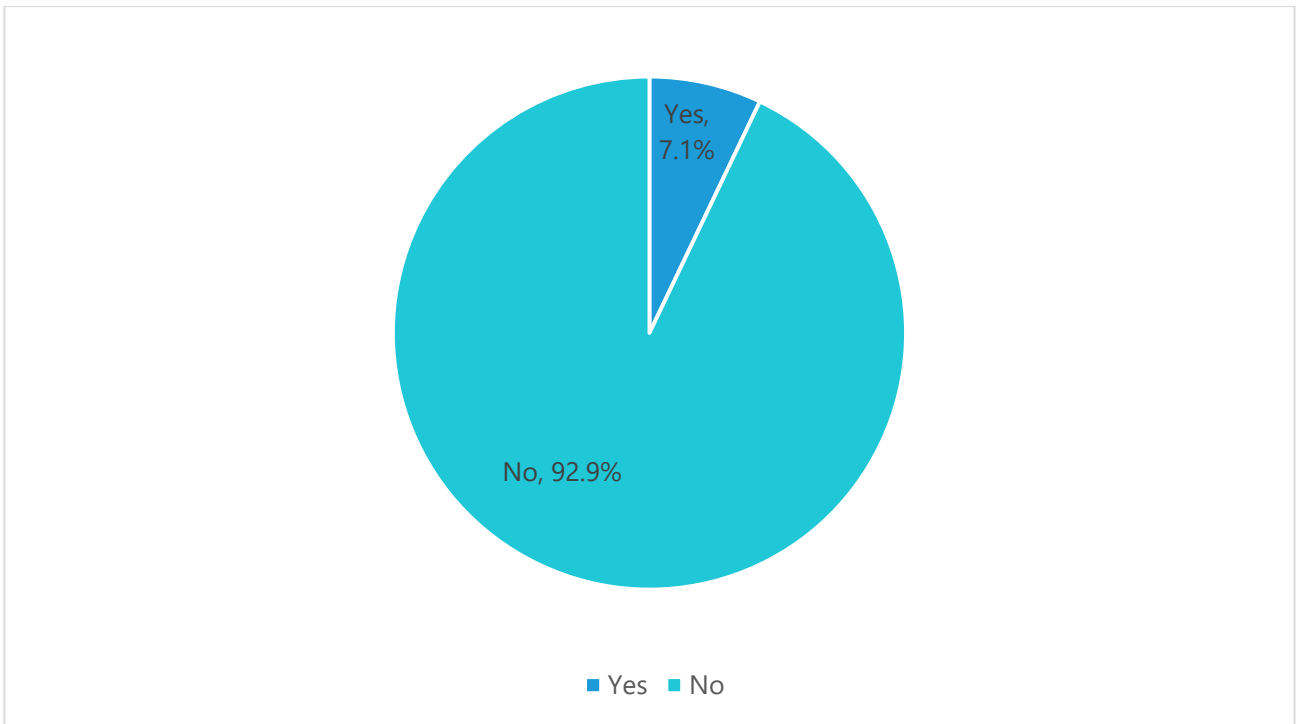
Total respondents=114

Figure 38: Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?



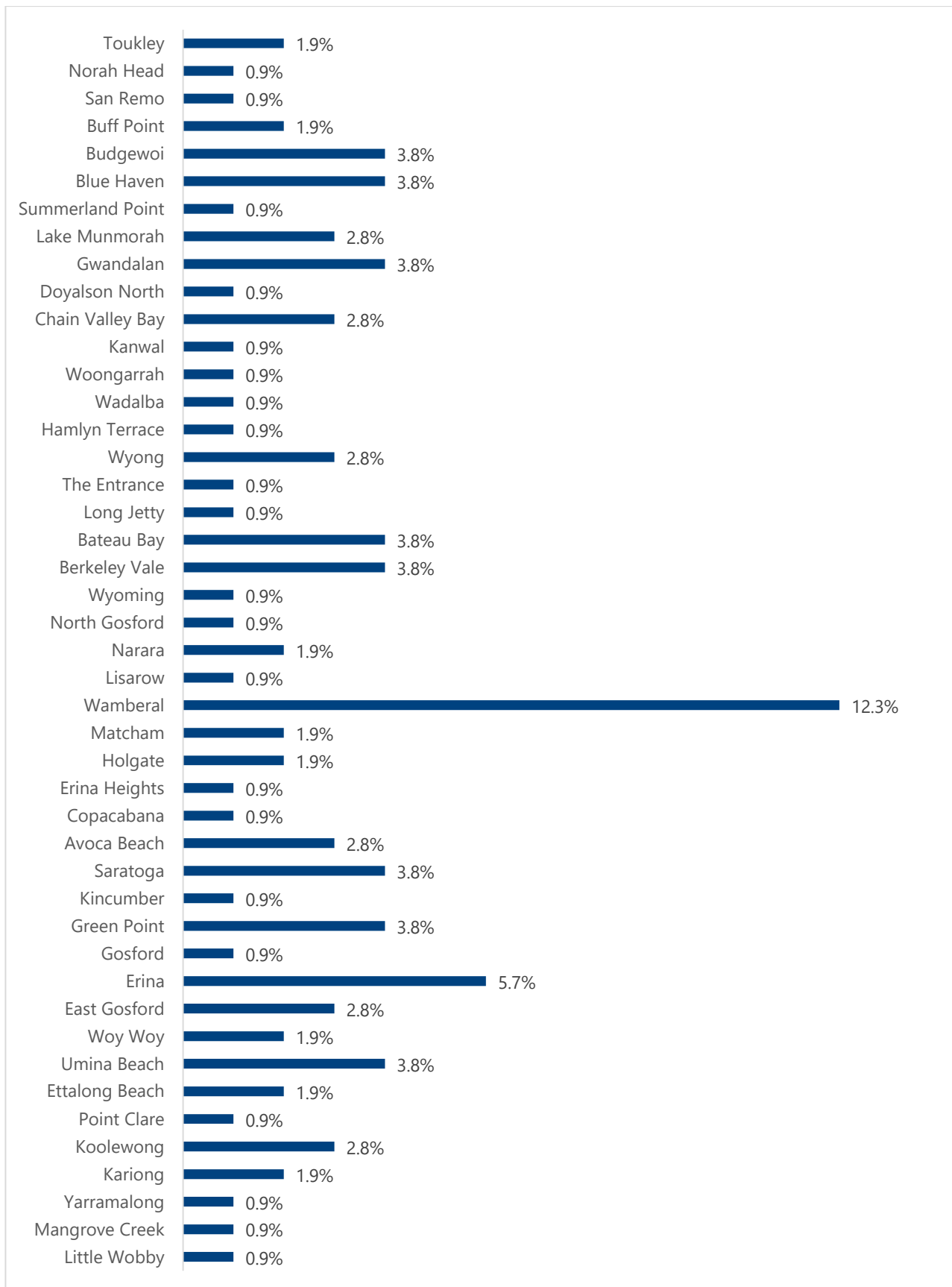
Total respondents=112

Figure 39: Do you speak a language other than English at home?



Total respondents=113

Figure 40: Suburb:



Total respondents=106

Figure 41: Former LGA (curated by suburb)

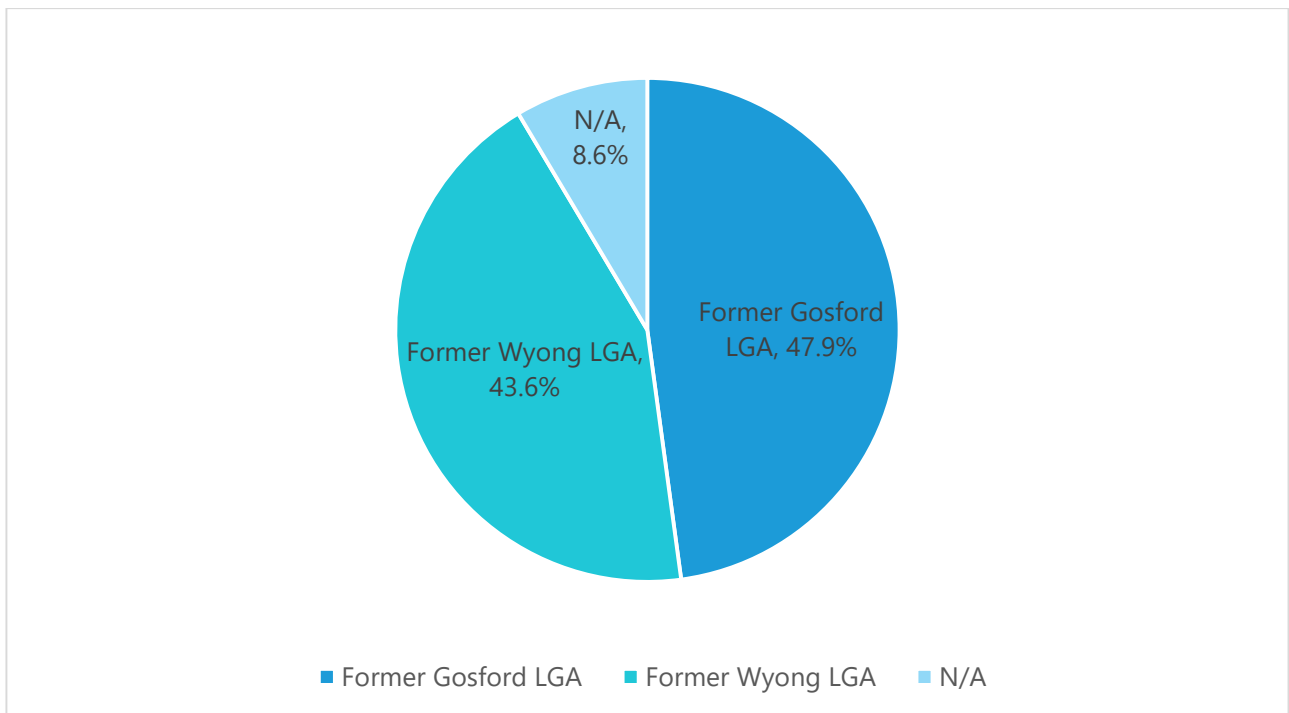
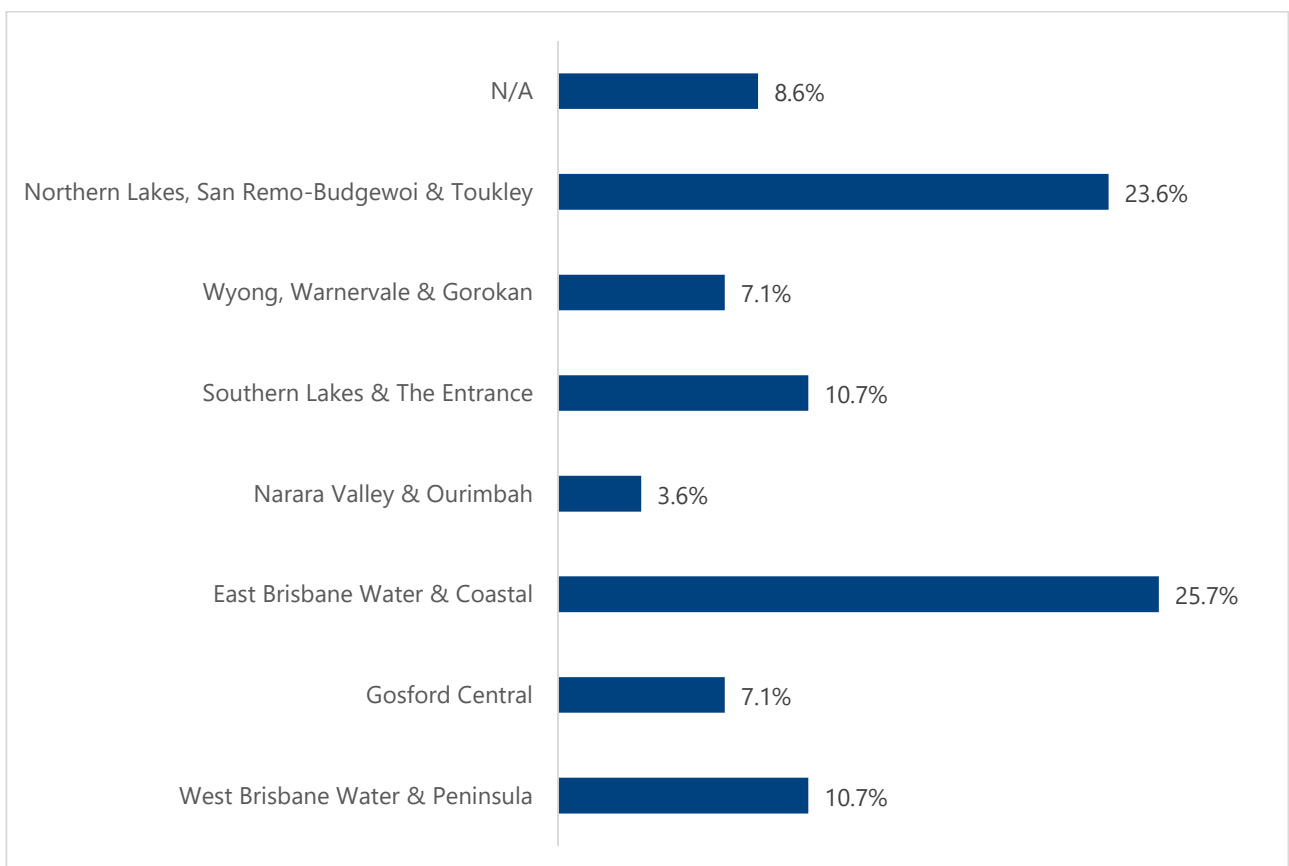


Figure 42: Planning area (curated by suburb)



Comparisons table

Throughout the phase one consultation we collected demographic information, this information allows us to further analyse the feedback we are receiving and from who. The table below explores these differences (participants who use Lake Macquarie are displayed):

	Foreshore, beachfront or riverside resident	Residents living between 500m and 2km from a waterway	34 years of age and under	35 years of age and over	Lived on the Central Coast less than 7 years	Lived on the Central Coast more than 10 years	Former Wyong Shire Council area	Former Gosford City area
Waterways are a significant reason I choose to live on the Central Coast	100% <i>Total respondents = 23</i>	93.8% <i>Total respondents = 32</i>	91.7% <i>Total respondents = 12</i>	97% <i>Total respondents = 100</i>	93.8% <i>Total respondents = 16</i>	96.9% <i>Total respondents = 98</i>	95% <i>Total respondents = 60</i>	100% <i>Total respondents = 63</i>
If waterway access, safety or condition declined significantly I would reduce the frequency I visit and use waterways.	91.3% <i>Total respondents = 23</i>	87.5% <i>Total respondents = 32</i>	91.7% <i>Total respondents = 12</i>	92% <i>Total respondents = 100</i>	87.5% <i>Total respondents = 16</i>	92.9% <i>Total respondents = 98</i>	91.7% <i>Total respondents = 60</i>	92.1% <i>Total respondents = 63</i>

	Foreshore, beachfront or riverside resident	Residents living between 500m and 2km from a waterway	34 years of age and under	35 years of age and over	Lived on the Central Coast less than 7 years	Lived on the Central Coast more than 10 years	Former Wyong Shire Council area	Former Gosford City area
If waterway access, safety or condition declined significantly I would consider moving from the Central Coast to another location.	73.9% <i>Total respondents = 23</i>	75% <i>Total respondents = 32</i>	75% <i>Total respondents = 12</i>	69% <i>Total respondents = 100</i>	62.5% <i>Total respondents = 16</i>	71.4% <i>Total respondents = 98</i>	66.7% <i>Total respondents = 60</i>	74.6% <i>Total respondents = 63</i>
More should be done to enhance access to waterways (e.g. shared pathways, jetties, boat ramps etc).	91.3% <i>Total respondents = 23</i>	84.4% <i>Total respondents = 32</i>	100% <i>Total respondents = 12</i>	88% <i>Total respondents = 100</i>	81.3% <i>Total respondents = 16</i>	90.8% <i>Total respondents = 98</i>	86.7% <i>Total respondents = 60</i>	84.1% <i>Total respondents = 63</i>

	Foreshore, beachfront or riverside resident	Residents living between 500m and 2km from a waterway	34 years of age and under	35 years of age and over	Lived on the Central Coast less than 7 years	Lived on the Central Coast more than 10 years	Former Wyong Shire Council area	Former Gosford City area
More should be done to protect and enhance the natural aspects of waterways such as the cleanliness of water, health of coastal vegetation, and the protection of wildlife.	91.3% <i>Total respondents = 23</i>	93.8% <i>Total respondents = 32</i>	100% <i>Total respondents = 12</i>	96% <i>Total respondents = 100</i>	100% <i>Total respondents = 16</i>	95.9% <i>Total respondents = 98</i>	96.7% <i>Total respondents = 60</i>	95.2% <i>Total respondents = 63</i>
I would support more resources being used for the management of our waterways and coast, even if it meant a very small increase in my property rates or rent.	84.2% <i>Total respondents = 19</i>	66.7% <i>Total respondents = 30</i>	83.3% <i>Total respondents = 12</i>	74% <i>Total respondents = 100</i>	81.3% <i>Total respondents = 16</i>	74.5% <i>Total respondents = 98</i>	78.2% <i>Total respondents = 60</i>	69.1% <i>Total respondents = 55</i>

Statistics provided are based on participants selecting "strongly agree" and "agree". Total respondents is based on responses within the demographic category selected.